



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

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## **THESIS**

**AN INSPIRATION FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE  
MIDDLE EAST: TURKEY**

by

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December 2011

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**AN INSPIRATION FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST:  
TURKEY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

For many years, countless individuals have debated the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Some scholars argue that Islam and democracy are incompatible because of the nature of Islam and its core teachings, while others assert the idea of their compatibility by emphasizing democracy's universality. Turkey, which is a predominantly Muslim, yet democratic country, is given as an example for the coherence and compatibility of Islam and democracy. More recent historic developments, beginning in Tunisia and continuing with other Middle Eastern countries, have triggered debates about the future direction of the political structure of these countries. The possibility of relatively strong fundamentalist-Islamist parties taking over after the collapse of existing governments has led to a reassessment of diverse democratization paths among not only Middle Eastern but also Western countries. Because of Turkey's strategic location, its common history with the Middle East, its political and economic strength, and most importantly, because of its unique character as a predominantly Muslim yet secular, democratic, and modernizing, Turkey again is being reviewed as a potential role model for countries in the Middle East. This thesis, after examining the compatibility of Islam and democracy and the core reasons for the democracy deficit in the Middle East, discusses the consideration of Turkey as a model of democratization for predominantly Muslim countries in the region. Moreover, it explores how Turkish historical experiences with democratization can teach us about the process of attaining a democratic society, regardless of its religion.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CUP	Committee of Union and Progress
DP	Democrat Party
DRA	Directorate of Religious Affairs
EU	European Union
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front
FP	Felicity Party
FRP	Free Republican Party
GNP	Gross National Product
JDP	Justice and Development Party
JP	Justice Party
MTI	Islamic Tendency Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDP	National Democratic Party
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NSP	National Salvation Party
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
PRP	Progressive Republican Party
RPP	Republican People's Party
TESEV	Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation
U.S.	United States
VP	Virtue Party
WP	Welfare Party

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

For many years, countless individuals have debated the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Some scholars argue that Islam and democracy are incompatible because of the nature of Islam and its core teachings, while others assert the idea of their compatibility by emphasizing democracy's universality. Actually, nowadays, about half of the world's Muslims live in democracies, near democracies, or in intermittent democracies.<sup>1</sup> Overall, forty-three societies can be identified in which the majority of their population is Muslim. Among those, twenty-seven are not part of the Arab world and seven of them can be classified as liberal democracies.<sup>2</sup> The scholars who support the idea that Islam and democracy are compatible offer the example of Turkey, which is a predominantly Muslim yet democratic country. According to many of them, Turkey should be seen as a role model for predominantly Muslim countries. Especially after the recent revolutionary movements in the Middle East, the Turkish model of democratization is being debated more broadly. This thesis examines considerations of Turkey as a model of democratization for predominantly Muslim countries in the Middle East. Moreover this thesis explores how Turkish historical experiences with democratization can teach us about the process of attaining a democratic society, regardless of its religion.

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

The suggestion of Turkey as a model of democratization emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of Cold War. To many in the West, Turkey seemed like the natural model for state building and democratization in the newly independent Central Asian states.<sup>3</sup> Moreover the adoption of the Broader Middle East

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations," *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October, 2000): 48. (Also see Appendix)

<sup>2</sup> Michael Minkenberg, "Democracy and Religion: Theoretical and Empirical Observations on the Relationship between Christianity, Islam and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 6 (2007): 902, 903. (Also see Appendix)

<sup>3</sup> Gareth Winrow, *Turkey in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (London, UK: Brookings Institution Press, 1995).

and North Africa Initiative in the G-8 Summit in June 2004 revealed a degree of consensus among the major extra-regional actors in pushing for political and economic reform in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> This led to the reemergence of such claims, especially in the United States, about Turkey as a potential model for the project of democratization in the Islamic world.<sup>5</sup> More recent historic developments, beginning in Tunisia and continuing with the other Middle Eastern countries, have triggered debates about the future direction of the political structure of these countries. The possibility of relatively strong Islamist parties taking over after the collapse of existing governments has led to a reassessment of diverse democratization paths among not only Middle Eastern, but also Western countries. Because of Turkey's location, its history, its size, its strength, and, most importantly, because of its unique character as a country with a majority Muslim population that is secular, democratic, and modernizing,<sup>6</sup> Turkey is again being reviewed as a potential model for countries in the Middle East. For these reasons, Turkey's history of democratization offers a great example to many countries around the Middle East.

### **C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES**

The major research question brings into consideration four distinct issues: (1) the compatibility of Islam and democracy; (2) the main reasons for a deficit of democracy in the Middle East; (3) the features of Turkey's successful democracy transition; and (4) the potential of Turkey's history of democratization to be seen as a "model" for other Middle Eastern countries.

This thesis will address the first issue to show that there is no incompatibility between Islam and democracy. Although, according to some scholars,<sup>7</sup> democracy is a Western idea that emerged in Europe after protracted struggles between the ruling elites and ordinary people, this thesis will support the universal values of democracy and claim that it can be adopted by many other countries regardless of their religions and cultures.

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<sup>4</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 45.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> For more information see Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993).

The second issue this thesis explores is the reason for a lack of democracy in Middle Eastern countries. While exploring the persistence of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian<sup>8</sup> orders and the main causes of the persistent democracy deficit in these countries, this thesis will address the major and common problems of the Muslim countries of the region in terms of obstacles to the democratization process. This thesis asserts that it is neither religion nor public opinion that hinders democratization in these countries. On the contrary, compounded with social, political, and economic conditions, it is the ruling elites' unwillingness to share their authority that hinders democratization in the Middle East.

After exploring Turkey's democratization history as the third issue, this thesis illustrates that the main threats to young democracies emerges after the establishment of its first democratic structure. In order to overcome this problem, this thesis emphasizes that the most important characteristics of Turkish democracy are: establishing reliable democratic institutions capable of protecting democracy against anti-democratic movements by drawing "the red lines"<sup>9</sup> around them, promoting modern secular forms of education, and improving the social and economic conditions of the country as a whole.

The fourth issue is the question of whether Turkey's democratization process can generally be adopted as a model for the Middle Eastern Arab countries. By exploring the applicability of this path, this thesis emphasizes that democratization is not only a political process but is also a social, economic and cultural evolution. This chapter further argues that secularism and its protection through democratic institutions, in combination with economic improvements, is a prerequisite for democratization in a country where political fundamentalist Islam is the main challenge for democratization.

#### **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Study of the identified problems necessarily starts with the existing literature, examining the compatibility of Islam and democracy. By examining this notion, scholars

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<sup>8</sup> Marina Ottaway refers to the Middle Eastern regimes as semi-authoritarian because they combine the rhetoric of democracy with illiberal traits.

<sup>9</sup> I use the term "Red lines" as the limits in which the anti-democratic players were forced to stay.

have endeavored to eliminate the ideological challenge that hinders the people's support for democracy. Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which the rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.<sup>10</sup> Robert Dahl argues that the minimum requirements for democracy are: freedom to form and join organizations; freedom of expression; the right to vote; eligibility for public office; the right of political leaders to compete for support and vote; alternative source of information; free and fair elections; institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preferences.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, a state must respect the rule of law and equality of its citizens in order to be considered democratic. In light of these definitions, some scholars claim that democracy places sovereignty in the hands of the individual, but in Islam, sovereignty belongs solely to God, thereby reducing the individual to a mere agent with little concern for the exercise of creativity and personal freedom.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to these theories, others argue that Islam is inherently democratic, not only because of the principles of consultation (*shura*), but also because of the concepts of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) and consensus (*ijma'*).<sup>13</sup> Many of them give Prophet Mohammad's *hadith* as an example for freedom of speech and diversity of thought that: "Differences of opinion within my community is a sign of God's mercy." Moreover, Alfred Stepan writes that about half of the world's Muslims, 435 million people (or over 600 million, if we include Indonesia), live in democracies, near-democracies, or intermittent democracies<sup>14</sup> in order to illustrate that popular thoughts of ordinary Muslims do not contradict the democratic notion. Stephen Hofmann states that "Simply because nondemocratic regimes are in place in a number of countries in the

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<sup>10</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy is... and is not," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no.3 (Summer 1991): 76.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Alan Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971): 1, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Anwar Ibrahim, "Universal Values and Muslim Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 3 (2006): 6.

<sup>13</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 434.

<sup>14</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations,"" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October, 2000): 48.

Muslim world does not mean that the vast majority of these countries' citizens are unsupportive of a democratic alternative."<sup>15</sup>

However, despite democratization in the world, Middle Eastern rulers have effectively resisted the emergence of democracy in their countries. Instead, they have masked their authoritarianism behind a façade of democratic procedures without the substance of a democratic rule. Regarding the reasons for the lack of democracy, Alfred Stepan argues that the "Islamic free-elections trap," allowing free elections in Islamic countries would bring to power governments that would use these democratic freedoms to destroy democracy itself.<sup>16</sup> For instance, the reluctant approach of the United States toward the resignation of President Mubarak during the Egyptian uprising was justified by many columnists by bringing up the "Islamic free-election trap." Hence, Western countries and Middle Eastern reform supporters were not wholeheartedly in favor of democratization without establishing and consolidating the institutions that are capable of enforcing democracy. Moreover, this "Islamic free-election trap" was used by the authoritarian governments to justify their autocratic rule over the country.

Michael L. Ross argues, in his article, that oil/gas/mineral resources, strategic transition ways, such as the Suez Canal, and international funding for the Middle Eastern states all hinder democracy because these factors provide the ability for the regimes to sustain their authoritarian behavior.<sup>17</sup> In order to explain this argument, he emphasizes that the revenue of natural resources have rentier, repression, and modernization effects that prevent further democratic improvements in the Middle East. With the rentier effect, he means that the governments use the wealth of their countries for subsidizing their citizens, low taxation, and so on, in order to make them less enthusiastic for change and democracy. With the repression effect, he points out that these governments establish security organizations to suppress the people who pose a threat to their rules. And last, with the modernization effect, he emphasizes that the money coming from natural

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<sup>15</sup> Steven R. Hofmann, "Islam and Democracy: Micro-Level Indications of Compatibility," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 6 (2004): 672.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations,"" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October, 2000): 48.

<sup>17</sup> Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 356.

resources make people more reluctant to work and progress. Actually, many scholars agree on the effect of the military or security forces in maintaining the authoritarian environment in their countries. For instance, the rulers have close ties with the military and give them concessions in order to keep them loyal, appoint proven loyalist officers to strategic positions, reward them with untouched budgets, transform them into key economic players, and even marginalize the regular military and build their own loyal security forces. Hence, circumscribed with these concessions, the army hardly poses any challenge to the regime because it is one of the main beneficiaries of this authoritarian status quo.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to these factors, there is also a lack of powerful and effective institutions in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, which causes a lack of horizontal and vertical accountability of the rulers, which in turn leads to durable authoritarianism. Eberhard Kienle discusses this issue and expresses that although there have been some institutional reforms in the Middle East, they have never led to centrally controlled institutions that can pull the country from central control and hold regimes accountable for their actions. He claims that the reason for this is that democracy promoters insufficiently reinforced these institutions that are supposed to contain and channel action towards democratic outcomes.<sup>19</sup> Hence, insufficient democracy promotion, in terms of institutionalization, strengthens the hands of authoritarian regimes and leads to easy manipulation of these institutions.

On the other hand, some, like Eberhard Kienle, address the issue from a different perspective, arguing that the Western countries' pressures for democracy promotion entail reactions against foreign interference.<sup>20</sup> Unquestionably, this anticipated reaction is because most of the Middle Eastern countries share the same history of colonization. Since they experienced colonization at the hands of a Western power, they see the

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<sup>18</sup> Philippe Droz-Vincent, "The Changing Role of Middle Eastern Armies," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 211.

<sup>19</sup> Eberhard Kienle, "Democracy Promotion and Renewal of Authoritarian Rule," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 246.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

promotion of democracy by Western countries as just another form of Western colonization of their cultures. Hence, even the potential beneficiaries of these reforms oppose democracy promotion and gather around their existing authoritarian rulers against the anticipated foreign interference.<sup>21</sup>

Apart from these internal, external, and even historical examples, many scholars argue that the foremost reason for this democracy deficit is the ruling elites' lack of will for reforming their ruling structures and democratizing their countries. However, Turkey overcame many of these difficulties after the War of Independence with the guidance and will of Atatürk and many other men who supported him in the idea of a new Turkey. As a predominantly Muslim country, Turkey achieved the initial stages of democracy only after harsh struggles between those who represented its past and those who fought for an anticipated future. It was not easy for Turkey and its mostly pious population to adopt the "Western" idea of democratization. Indeed, it started during the late Ottoman era. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Ottoman rulers started to realize the weakness of their army and the backwardness of their empire *vis-a-vis* Western countries. As Bernard Lewis states in his article, "this was a time of closer contact with the West, through the study of language, a growing Western presence in terms of merchants, educators, and, increasingly, military and naval personnel, and the beginnings of a significant Muslim, chiefly Ottoman presence in Western countries."<sup>22</sup> The last century of the Ottoman Empire witnessed unprecedented reforms including secular laws and education, financial, social, military and institutional arrangements that eventually led to the declaration of its first constitution and the foundation of its first assembly.<sup>23</sup>

After the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the new Turkish Republic began to develop while establishing the infrastructure of democracy under the guidance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. While improving the institutional,

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<sup>21</sup> Eberhard Kienle, "Democracy Promotion and Renewal of Authoritarian Rule," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 239.

<sup>22</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the Only Muslim Democracy," *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March, 1994): 41.

<sup>23</sup> For more information see Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004).

financial, and political structure of the country, secularism constituted the keystone of Turkish constitutional theory and political life.<sup>24</sup> Turkish secularism has not meant simply a formal separation between religious and political authority and institutions, but rather a positivist state ideology to engineer a homogenous and stratified society.<sup>25</sup> The ideology of secularism aimed to not only curtail religion in public space, but also to reduce it to the individual level. For this purpose, secularism was introduced to the constitution, together with the five other guiding principles of Kemalism:<sup>26</sup> republicanism, etatism, populism, nationalism, and reformism.

Successive Turkish governments did wisely not attempt to introduce full democracy all at once, but instead went through successive phases of limited democracy, preparing the state and society for further development, and, at the same time, encouraging the rise of civil society.<sup>27</sup> Thus, Democracy was gradually established beginning with the foundation of the republic in 1923, and as the cultural level of people became adequate to support it. For example, in the 1950 election, the Republican People's Party (RPP) that had enjoyed a monopoly of political power for decades, allowed itself to lose a free election and submit itself to the will of its citizens.<sup>28</sup> The Democrat Party (DP) entered this 1950 election and eventually won it. Thus, Turkey turned to a sustained competitive electoral regime.<sup>29</sup>

Between 1950 and 2000, Turkey's political life witnessed four military interventions that are generally considered as coups, though they were essentially for law

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<sup>24</sup> Serif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, eds. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993): 347.

<sup>25</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 25.

<sup>26</sup> Serif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, eds. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993): 365.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the Only Muslim Democracy," *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March, 1994): 45.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>29</sup> Michele Penner Angrist, "Party Systems and Regime Formation in the Modern Middle East: Explaining Turkish Exceptionalism," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 239.



and order reactions against an ideological polarization of the people.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, these interventions were generally welcomed by the society and perceived as necessary for order and democracy in the country. According to Binnaz Toprak, during the fall of Erbakan's Islamist government in 1997, although the military played an important role, there had been many democratic efforts by the civil society such as NGOs, labor unions, professional organizations, academicians, and business organizations, which explicitly showed the maturity of the people's democratic understandings.<sup>31</sup> In a nutshell, the democratic institutions, such as the judiciary, civil society, free media and press played a major role in drawing the red lines of democracy in Turkey's democratization history. The military was only the exposed face, there to stand against anti-democratic forces, although its intervention was undemocratic, per se. However, it is obvious that in a democratically naive country, in order to protect the regime against its enemies, there has to be a powerful pro-democratic institution. As Binnaz Toprak writes, "a democratic environment provides a platform for the organization of anti-system parties while it forces them to limit their sphere of action and to moderate their ideology."<sup>32</sup>

In light of these features of Turkey's history of democratization, some scholars argue that Turkey is, in itself, a unique example that it cannot be a model for political reform for the Islamic countries in the Middle East. In this respect, they argue that Turkey's secularism, the unique role of Atatürk, its imperial state tradition inherited from its Ottoman legacy, and the absence of colonial legacy, makes the Turkish example unique.<sup>33</sup> Moreover its close relationship with the West that started during the Ottoman era, adds to this unique character. On the other hand, the counter argument reminds us that the Middle Eastern countries also shared some of these features during the Ottoman

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<sup>30</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 10.

<sup>31</sup> Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (June, 2005): 172.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>33</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 16, and for more information see Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the Only Muslim Democracy," *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March, 1994).

rule, such as secularization, interaction with Western countries and so on.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, for decades, particularly after the foundation of the Middle East Partnership Initiative in 2002 by the United States, many of the Middle Eastern countries have enjoyed the foreign aid offered to promote democracy in the region.

Apart from these arguments, scholars argue over whether Turkey can be considered a model. There are many lessons that can be learned from its democratization history. For instance, Ömer Taşpınar argues that Turkey's Kemalist transformation between 1923 and 1950 conveys three major lessons of relevance for the transition to democracy in the Arab World: (1) free elections should be seen as the culmination of the democratization process; (2) a clear separation of mosque and state may not be feasible, especially in the short-run; (3) establishing a positivist education system should be the top priority.<sup>35</sup> He also mentions that the Turkish model does not mean an exact blueprint for necessary reforms. However, he emphasizes that it can offer relevant lessons from past political experience and a practical framework for a progressive agenda.<sup>36</sup>

In light of these scholarly works on Turkey's democratization history and its features, this thesis asserts that consolidation of the institutions, such as civil society, an independent judiciary and military; legislation of secular laws that would prevent the exploitation of people's religious values by political actors; and promoting positivist education with economic improvements are the most important necessary conditions in the democratization process in the Middle East.

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<sup>34</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 51.

<sup>35</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 25.

<sup>36</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "The Turkish Model: How Applicable." TASSA Annual Conference Proceedings, March 25-26, 2006: 35. <http://www.tassausa.org/docs/TASSA2006CProceedings.pdf>

## II. COMPATIBILITY OF ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

Anwar Ibrahim writes that, regardless of people's status, wealth, nationality or religion, attaining and sustaining the superiority of the law in every sphere of life is one of the most important issues in every society that is seeking to live in peace. He emphasizes the importance of the rule of law and illustrates the consequences of the lack of it by stating that:

We don't want our homes to be broken into and searched by the police without a court order, a court order that must be granted on legitimate grounds... We don't want anyone to be held under arrest without explicit charges. We don't want confessions extracted through torture, physical or psychological abuse, or any kind of threat or promise.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to the rule of law, the political side of democracy requires a system of governance in which the rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm, by citizens acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, freedom of expression, freedom of speech, equality in justice, the right to elect and compete to be elected, and free and fair elections are the basic requirements that have to be fulfilled to call a system democratic. Actually, all of these features are the necessities of the others. For example, before attaining equality among the citizens, the right to vote and be elected cannot be guaranteed. Also, only with free and fair elections can freedom of choice and expression find its real meaning.

Because the state has a legitimate monopoly on the use of force over a specified territory, when this unique authority is captured by any kind of domestic actors, this coercive force in wrong hands can lead to disastrous results, even to the destruction of the state. Alfred C. Stepan emphasizes in his article that a democratically elected government must rule within the confines of its constitution and be bound by the law and by a

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<sup>37</sup> Anwar Ibrahim, "Universal Values and Muslim Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 3 (2006): 10.

<sup>38</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, "What Democracy is... and is not," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1991): 76.

complex set of vertical and horizontal institutions that help ensure accountability.<sup>39</sup> Without these political and legal institutions' control over the government, holding the government and its forces accountable for their actions would be impossible. With this accountability, elected representatives will be obliged to answer the questions asked by their electorates or constitutional institutions. Therefore, a state's implementation of force can be limited or shaped by these institutions.

In democracies, free and fair elections are a legitimate way of transferring the authority of citizens to their representatives. The government members constrain their use of force and feel accountable for their actions during their governing period, not only because of their legal obligations, but also because they are concerned with their reelection. Moreover, securing the right of every person to express himself freely and have the right to form civil organizations that can hold rulers accountable for their actions is also a very important characteristic for a stable democracy.

Having given the explanation and minimum requirements of democracy, one has to realize that democracy does not depend on a nation's culture, their ethnicity, or even their religions. Democracy is a system of governance, and a developmental process is agreed upon to achieve a public welfare without the distinction of any kinds of language, religion, ethnicity or skin color. Democracy depends on pure equality, which literally stems from being human beings, per se. No other regime type can give the same freedom, equality, and participation in the governance to its citizens. Moreover, there is no regime type that has the same respect that democracy has toward the rule of law:

*Tawhid* (the conviction and witnessing that there is no God but God and Muhammad is His prophet) is the core of the Islamic religious experience and, therefore, the consequence of it is that God is unique and His will is the imperative and guide for all lives, which means that there can be only one sovereign and that is God.<sup>40</sup>

According to this fact, many Muslim or non-Muslim scholars argue that Islam and democracy are incompatible mainly because of the concept of sovereignty contradiction

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<sup>39</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations,'" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October, 2000): 39.

<sup>40</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 23.

between them.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, many others claim that, in Islam, the law was defined and promulgated by God and that God's law could not be altered by popular will.<sup>42</sup> In line with these views, in Samuel Huntington's theory called "the clash of civilizations" the relationship between Islam and democracy takes more attention from him. He asserts that "God's being Caesar" in Islam is the fundamental obstacle for any successful democratization and, thus, lacks any prospect for democracy in Muslim societies.<sup>43</sup>

Many scholars assert that democracy, which is the rule of humans, contradicts with Islam, which is the rule of God. For instance, Iranian author Sayyid Rizvi, asserts that the Islamic system, from the beginning to end, is "for Allah" and if it is done "for the people," it is called "hidden polytheism."<sup>44</sup> Alfred Stepan, while discussing the separation of religion and the state in Islam, argues that it is the lack of space for democratic public opinion in making laws that is seen as deriving from the Koran, in which God dictated to the Prophet Muhammad the content of fixed laws that a good Islamic polity must follow.<sup>45</sup>

It is claimed that, in Islam, laws are made not by the people, but by Allah and the people are required to follow without making any comments and suggestions about these laws and legislations.<sup>46</sup> According to Abul-Ala-Mawdudi, in democracy, the people of a country are governed by the rules which they themselves have framed and all the inhabitants of that country should obey this democratic authority. But in Islam, he asserts, Allah alone is the owner of the land and the lawgiver to all human beings. Thus, He alone must be obeyed and served, and all affairs of men must be conducted according to His

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<sup>41</sup> Actually, the same problem existed in Christianity as well during the Roman Empire. The perception of Jesus Christ as God's sovereign made the Roman Emperor upset because he perceived this assertion as a threat to his rule.

<sup>42</sup> John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?" *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 172.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Minkenberg, "Democracy and Religion: Theoretical and Empirical Observations on the Relationship between Christianity, Islam and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 6 (2007): 902.

<sup>44</sup> Hoffman, Christian H. "Islam and Democracy." *Abd al Hadi Publications* (accessed August 24, 2011): 4. [http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam_democracy.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations,"" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October, 2000): 48.

<sup>46</sup> Hoffman, Christian H. "Islam and Democracy." *Abd al Hadi Publications* (accessed August 24, 2011): 3. [http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam_democracy.pdf)

rules.<sup>47</sup> For this reason, some Muslim scholars support that because Islamic principles are transcendental and cannot be undermined by popular whim, which is the source of law in democracies, Islam and democracy are inherently incompatible.<sup>48</sup>

There are also some scholars who go beyond these fundamental controversies when discussing Islam and democracy. It is obvious that one of the main features of democracy is the equality of the people under law. Anne-Marie Delcambre asserts, in her book, that in its founding texts, Islam is against equality and Islamic law (*sharia*) and is profoundly non-egalitarian. According to her, in Islam, the Muslim is above the non-Muslim, the believer is above the atheist, the man is above the woman, and the free man is above the slave.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, she continues by claiming that for Islam, man is a slave, a servant of God, and as such, he has no rights. Hence, the democratic understanding of man, which means having rights only for being a human, is both inconceivable and intolerable in Islam.<sup>50</sup> She asserts that being a believer makes one respected in Islam, which is fundamentally incompatible with democratic principles.

Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, rejects the democratic concept of government by arguing that although parliamentary and constitutional systems are compatible with the Islamic system of government, founding different political parties is a potential threat to Islamic unity.<sup>51</sup> He believes that these political parties would make the Muslim community separate into different groups, and ruin the community's unity. Instead of founding political parties, he supported the idea that the *ummah* (Muslim community) ought to be joined in one party,<sup>52</sup> which is actually contrary to the plurality principle of democracy. Another leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood organization, Sayyid Qutb, argues that both Islam and democracy

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<sup>47</sup> John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?" *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 172.

<sup>48</sup> David R. Smock, "Islam and Democracy," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, no. 93 (September 2002): 4. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr93.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Anne-Marie Delcambre, *Inside Islam* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2005): 97.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>51</sup> Azzam S. Tamimi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought," (accessed May, 10, 2011): 8. <http://ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/democracy.htm>

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

are incompatible due to God's sole sovereignty in Islam. But on the other hand, Abul Ala Mawdudi, a major 20th century Islamist thinker, believed that Islam was democratic because of its legitimate institutions of *shura* (decision-making process by consultation). By rejecting the idea of secularism in democracy, he interpreted the concept of democracy and Islam in a particular way, calling his system a "theo-democracy" or "democracy under God"<sup>53</sup> in which the behavior of the people is constrained by God's divine rules. He asserted that those who are in charge of the affairs of the people and who run them on their behalf, must be appointed by the free will of the people and they should only administer and govern through consultation in order to obtain the consent of the people.<sup>54</sup>

When one first approaches Islam and its teachings, it is probable for him to perceive that since Islam places sovereignty solely to God, and shows the way to pray and the way to live, it does not leave people a free space to interpret its religion and its worldly surroundings in order to achieve development in their lives. Anwar Ibrahim expresses his objection to this narrow understanding by labeling it a misreading of the sources of religion and this misreading represents a capitulation to extremist discourse.<sup>55</sup> He further argues that, actually, freedom is the fundamental objective of the divine Islam and Islam has always expressed the primacy of justice, which is a close approximation of the West's definition of freedom.<sup>56</sup> In addition, John Esposito and James Piscatori assert that Islam is inherently democratic, not only because of the principles of consultation, but also because of the Islamic principles of independent reasoning and consensus.<sup>57</sup>

Actually, when one compares the views that support the idea of compatibility and which rejects that idea, one can conclude with many examples that support the former

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<sup>53</sup> Hugh Goddard, "Islam and Democracy," *Political Quarterly the Political Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January, 2002): 6.

<sup>54</sup> Azzam S. Tamimi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought," (accessed May, 10, 2011): 10, 11. <http://ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/democracy.htm>

<sup>55</sup> Ibrahim Anwar, "Universal Values and Muslim Democracy," in *Democracy: A Reader*, eds. Larry Jay Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009):370.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>57</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 434.

view. John O. Voll, after examining the Koranic verses relating to political and social life of the early Muslim community, concludes that, the principles on which the political system of Islam was grounded were thoroughly democratic in character.<sup>58</sup> According to Voll, the Koran recognizes individual and public liberty, secures the person and property of the subjects, and fosters the growth of all civic virtues. John Voll also points out other Islamic traditions, such as the pledge of allegiance to the leader or separation of the domains of the executive and legislative powers in Islam as being another evidence of Islam's compatibility with a democratic form of government.<sup>59</sup> Ali Abd Ar-Raziq, an Egyptian Islamic scholar who was a supporter and one of the intellectual fathers of Islamic secularism, denied the existence of a political order in Islam, which some scholars claim was established during the first years of Islam's emergence. He asserted that the Prophet never established a political order because it was not part of his mission to found a state.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, whether there was an established political order during the years of Prophet Muhammad or not, there is a common perception that the greatest periods of Islamic rule have been precisely during that time in which Islam's structural and intellectual developments were the most democratic.<sup>61</sup>

Rashid al-Ghannoushi, who is a democratic leader of Tunisia and seeks a developed country and society, emphasizes that democracy, popular sovereignty, the role of the state which is not something from God but from the people, multiparty elections, and constitutional law are all part of an Islamic thinking whose roots and legitimacy are found in fresh interpretation or reinterpretation of Islamic sources.<sup>62</sup> He asserts that democracy is the most effective way to provide a system for avoiding a single individual

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<sup>58</sup> John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?" *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 173.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Azzam S. Tamimi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought," (accessed May, 10, 2011): 9.  
<http://ireland.iol.ie/~affifi/Articles/democracy.htm>

<sup>61</sup> John O. Voll, "Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?" *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 173.

<sup>62</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 437.



or class claim of sovereignty.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, he defends that “reconciling Islam and modernity involves introduction of democracy and freedom, both of which are consistent with Islamic principles.”<sup>64</sup>

From a different perspective, Ray Takeyh defends the idea that Western democracy elevated the freedom and will of individuals above the community’s welfare, and, therefore, changed the role of religion from shaping the public order and its values to a private guide for individual conscience. He argues that in contrast to this Western understanding, Islam, by trying to balance its emphasis on reverence with the popular desire for self-expression, will impose certain limits on individual choice.<sup>65</sup> However, as Rashid al-Ghannoushi emphasizes, the idea of community’s well-being as the ultimate purpose can only be achieved by using democracy and freedom of thought.

Many of the scholars of Islam support the idea that the principle of *shura* or consultative decision-making is the main source of democratic ethics in Islam.<sup>66</sup> It is stated by God in the Koran that “who obey their Lord, attend to their prayers, and conduct their affairs by mutual consent: who bestow in alms part of what We have given them and, when oppressed, seek to redress their wrongs.”<sup>67</sup> Muhammad Abduh, who is regarded as the founder of the Islamic Modernism, equates Islamic *shura* with democracy. Addressing the question of authority, he denies the existence of a theocracy in Islam and put forward that the authority of the ruler is civil.<sup>68</sup> Actually, in Islam the privilege of representation is granted to the entire Muslim community rather than to a single individual or to a group.<sup>69</sup> According to this information, the selection of the representatives has to be based on the free will of the people who are going to be

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<sup>63</sup> John O. Voll, “Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?” *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 173.

<sup>64</sup> David R. Smock, “Islam and Democracy,” *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, no. 93 (September 2002): 6. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr93.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Ray Takeyh, “Faith-Based Initiatives,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 127 (November-December, 2001): 70.

<sup>66</sup> David R. Smock, “Islam and Democracy,” *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, no. 93 (September 2002): 1. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr93.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> Surah 42, Verse 38.

<sup>68</sup> Azzam S. Tamimi, “Democracy in Islamic Political Thought,” (accessed May, 10, 2011): 3. <http://ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/democracy.htm>

<sup>69</sup> John O. Voll, “Islam and Democracy: Is Modernization a Barrier?” *Religion Compass* 1, no. 1 (2007): 173.

governed by the ruler. In line with this information, Muhammad Abduh defends the idea of pluralism and parliamentarianism, rejecting the other scholars' claims that it would undermine the unity of the Muslim community.

Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad, who was an Egyptian intellectual, focused on two concepts of Islam to support its compatibility with democracy. According to him, the first is the concept of *ijma* (consensus) which is the third foundation of Islamic law. According to this concept, if the Muslim community "agrees on a particular point of law this becomes legally binding on all Muslims."<sup>70</sup> The foundation for the validity of this concept can be found in the often-cited *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad that "My community will not agree upon an error."<sup>71</sup> The second concept, according to him, is *bay'a* (pledge of allegiance), a traditional practice of oath with which the caliphs secured their subjects allegiance to him. This "was a precedent for democracy since the idea of some kind of contract between rulers and ruled could underpin and validate the electoral process."<sup>72</sup>

Actually, Islam is a faith, a cultural system, a system of values and ethics, but not necessarily a political system by its nature.<sup>73</sup> John Esposito and John Voll write that, in Islamic history, because there are no explicit formulations of state structure in the Koran, the legitimacy of the state depended upon to what extent state organization and power reflect the will of the Muslim community.<sup>74</sup> It is generally accepted by scholars that consensus and consultation are the most important bases for implementing this common will in the Muslim community. While God commands people to make their decisions with consultation, He does not specify any specific method for this action. Although the number, the form of election, the duration of representation, etc., are left to the discretion of the people, it is obvious that according to God's will, one should be surrounded by

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<sup>70</sup> Hugh Goddard, "Islam and Democracy," *Political Quarterly the Political Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January, 2002):7.

<sup>71</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 28.

<sup>72</sup> Hugh Goddard, "Islam and Democracy," *Political Quarterly the Political Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January, 2002): 7.

<sup>73</sup> Bassam Tibi, "Why they can't be Democratic," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 43.

<sup>74</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 28.

representative personalities, enjoying the confidence of those whom they represent.<sup>75</sup> Rashid al-Ghannoushi stresses that “Islam did not come with a specific program concerning life. It is our duty to formulate this program through interaction between Islamic precepts and modernity.”<sup>76</sup> While formulating the appropriate program for the community, according to Islam, the rulers have to respect the will and rights of the people because, during the Judgment-Day, Allah will question individuals but not the governments and hold them responsible for their actions. It is stated in the Koran that “it is they who will be punished or rewarded accordingly on Judgment Day.”<sup>77</sup>

Some Muslim activists reject the compatibility of Islam and democracy and call for the application of Islamic law by confusing the boundary between the overall sovereignty of God and popular sovereignty.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, David R. Smock states that regardless of where sovereignty is placed theoretically, in practice, it is the state that exercises the sovereignty, not God. After asserting that the issue is how to limit the de facto sovereignty of people Smock emphasizes that democracy, with its principle of limited government, public accountability, checks and balances, separation of powers and transparency succeeds in limiting human sovereignty.<sup>79</sup> It is true that whether it is called democracy or caliphate the main problem is finding reliable ways in order to limit the authority of the rulers. Moreover even if some Muslims want to call their political systems a caliphate, they still have to find institutions in order to implement consultation and control the caliph.<sup>80</sup> Actually, there is no way of implementing God’s sovereignty without having human beings’ participation in governing procedure and without the reinterpretation of Koran and *sunnah* in accordance with the demands of the time. If Islam is sound for all the times and places, then one must not neglect historical

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<sup>75</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 27.

<sup>76</sup> Ray Takeyh, “Faith-Based Initiatives,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 127 (November-December, 2001): 69.

<sup>77</sup> Surah 38, Verse 26.

<sup>78</sup> Ali R. Abootalebi, “Islam, Islamist, and Democracy,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (March 1999): 17.

<sup>79</sup> David R. Smock, “Islam and Democracy,” *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, no. 93 (September 2002): 4. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr93.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Christian H. Hoffman, “Islam and Democracy,” *Abd al Hadi Publications* (accessed August 24, 2011): 20. [http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam_democracy.pdf)

developments and the interaction of different generations.<sup>81</sup> It is obvious that sacred texts do not change, but the interpretation of them must be in flux because of the age and the changing conditions in which believers live influence the understanding of them.<sup>82</sup>

Contrary to some scholars' view that Islamic law has to be the only source of law in a Muslim state, many others argue that it is unlikely to be so in the Middle Eastern Arab countries because their legal systems borrow heavily from non-Muslim sources for most of their laws, and their courts are generally structured on European civil-law models.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, in rejection of Islamic law's political perspective, Bassam Tibi argues that the term, *Sharia* occurs only once in the Koran, in a *surah* that deals with the meaning not of law, but of morality. He claims that neither the term *dawla* (state) nor the term *nizam* (order) occurs in the Koran.<sup>84</sup> In the Koran, the governing systems are all evaluated according to their rulers' obedience of God's guidance. Christian H. Hoffman argues that it can be deducted from these historical evaluations of the Koran that a junta and a tyranny are not the systems accepted by God and a monarchy with a just ruler may be one acceptable method of government.<sup>85</sup> The most important conclusion, based on these findings, is that, Islamic law does not entail a specific form of government and it allows Muslims to freely choose for themselves and to discover the most suitable form of government for their needs. For instance, during the period of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, many administrative and legislative enactments were not derived either directly or indirectly from the Koran or *sunnah*, but from purely commonsense considerations of governmental efficiency and public interest.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Dale F. Eickelman, "Islam and the Languages of Modernity," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter, 2000): 126.

<sup>82</sup> Ali R. Abootelebi, "Islam, Islamist, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (March 1999): 19.

<sup>83</sup> Nathan J. Brown et al., "Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Paper*, no.67 (March 2006): 9.

<sup>84</sup> Bassam Tibi, "Why they can't be Democratic," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 44, 45.

<sup>85</sup> Christian H. Hoffman, "Islam and Democracy," *Abd al Hadi Publications* (accessed August 24, 2011): 15. [http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam_democracy.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> Muhammad Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961): 23.

David R. Smock mentions a precedent from the life of the Prophet Muhammad, which is known as the Compact or Constitution of Medina. He claims that this precedent shows how democratic practices and theories are compatible with Islamic principles. According to his article, after the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD, he established the first Islamic state and became the political head of Medina. For ten years, the Prophet ruled in accordance with a tripartite agreement that was signed by the three different communities of Medina—the indigenous Muslims of Medina, immigrant Muslims who came from Mecca, and the Jews of Medina. With this compact Muslim and non-Muslims became equal citizens of the Islamic state with similar political rights and duties. Besides, different religious communities enjoyed religious autonomy within the state of Medina. Smock argues that, actually the Prophet Muhammad could have claimed that the truth revealed by God serves as a constitution and could have forced both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities to obey it. But contrary to this idea, the Prophet chose to draw up a historically specific constitution by seeking the consent of all people (including non-Muslims) who would be affected by its implementation. Thus, the first Islamic state was based on a social contract which can be considered constitutional in character, and its ruler ruled with the explicit written consent of all citizens of the state.<sup>87</sup>

Actually, Islam is not a barrier to the foundation of democratic values in Muslim communities. Contrary to the beliefs that support the incompatibility of Islam and democracy, Steven Hofmann claims that political matters in Islam are open to interpretation, and moreover, the Koran, the *sunnah* (a set of Muslim customs and rules based on the words and acts of Prophet Muhammad), and the *hadith* (a collection of writings that document the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) may be able to serve as a framework for the construction of democracy rather than serving as the basis of authoritarian and fundamentalist dogma.<sup>88</sup> As proof, one can give the Prophet

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<sup>87</sup> David R. Smock, "Islam and Democracy," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, no. 93 (September 2002): 5. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr93.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> Steven R. Hofmann, "Islam and Democracy: Micro-Level Indications of Compatibility," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 6 (2004): 673, 655.

Muhammad's *hadith* that "Differences of opinion within my community is a sign of God's mercy," which literally describes democratic ideas such as freedom of speech and diversity of thought.

Islamic thought contains concepts comparable to modern Western principles of democracy, pluralism, and human rights.<sup>89</sup> These principles are not only based on the writings of the Koran, but are also derived from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and the era of four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. For instance, Islam supports the idea of social equality of the people and suggests that all human beings have to be given the same opportunities for development and self-expression.<sup>90</sup> Islam also stresses religious tolerance which is exemplified in the Koran with "Let there be no compulsion in religion."<sup>91</sup> Moreover, there is also nothing in Islamic scripture to deny Muslims' freedom of action to improve their individual and communal lives; nor does *Sharia* promote subservience to the state as proof of proper Muslim behavior.<sup>92</sup>

Islamic law is based on the legal decisions that were thought up and evaluated by many groups in the first centuries of Islamic history. Esposito and Voll assert that during this century, local rulers and judges were called upon to make many decisions within the general framework of the developing understanding of Islam.<sup>93</sup> This reinterpretation and evaluation, according to developing understandings, led to the foundation of different schools of Islamic jurisprudence that actually reflect freedom of thought in Islam and provides an indication that the Islamic revelation did not mean a single and monolithic structure of canon or imperial law.<sup>94</sup> In addition, they also examine the idea of *dhimmi* (a form of social contract through which the Muslim community provides hospitality and protection to the members of other religions, specifically Christianity and Judaism) in

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<sup>89</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Religion and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 20, no. 2 (2009): 11.

<sup>90</sup> Muhammad Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961): 20.

<sup>91</sup> Surah 2, Verse 256.

<sup>92</sup> Ali R. Abootalebi, "Islam, Islamist, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (March 1999): 17.

<sup>93</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 44.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

Islam. They argue that although the concept of *dhimmi* in the pre-modern history of Islam, does not reflect the same understanding of modern democratic concept of minority rights, it does have many analogous features and provides a clearer foundation for such democratic concepts.<sup>95</sup> In addition to these Islamic principles, which provide a positive significance for democratization, Esposito and Voll argue that many other traditions, such as the right of the Sheikh ul-Islam to issue judgments deposing the sultan for violating the basic Islamic law in the Ottoman Empire, can be perceived as an example of democratic concepts like constitutional opposition and limiting the government's power.<sup>96</sup>

Nowadays, about half of the world's Muslims live in democracies, near democracies, or in intermittent democracies.<sup>97</sup> Overall, forty-three societies can be identified in which the majority of their population is Muslim. Among those, twenty-seven are not part of the Arab world and seven can be classified as liberal democracies.<sup>98</sup> Although this alone may not be a justification for the compatibility of Islam and democracy, it is enough to refute the claims of some scholars who argue against their compatibility solely because of the lack of democracy in Muslim communities. Simply because nondemocratic regimes are in place in a number of countries in the Muslim world, does not mean that the vast majority of these countries' citizens are unsupportive of a democratic alternative, which is another implication of scholars who label Islam as anti-democratic.<sup>99</sup> Whether the word "democracy" is used or not almost all Muslims today see it as one of the universal conditions of the modern world.<sup>100</sup> Besides, Steven R. Hofmann justifies this view, in his empirical research, in both Christian and Muslim

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<sup>95</sup> John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Islam and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 47.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>97</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the 'Twin Tolerations,'" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October, 2000): 48. (Also see Appendix)

<sup>98</sup> Michael Minkenberg, "Democracy and Religion: Theoretical and Empirical Observations on the Relationship between Christianity, Islam and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 6 (2007): 902, 903. (Also see Appendix)

<sup>99</sup> Steven R. Hofmann, "Islam and Democracy: Micro-Level Indications of Compatibility," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 6 (2004): 672.

<sup>100</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 440.

societies that, according to the results, Muslims tend to evaluate the concept of democracy at least as favorably as Christians.<sup>101</sup>

Many scholars argue that the interpretation of various empirical findings and analyses show that it is not the problematic relationship between religious institutions and the state in the Muslim world, or the religion that causes the democracy deficit. On the contrary, it is the political and economic factors confirmed in the history of the Middle East that cause it. Larry Diamond sees the basic obstacle to democracy in the Middle East is not the culture or the religion of Islam, or the society, but rather the regimes themselves and the region's distinctive geopolitics.<sup>102</sup> Political scientist Abdul Rashid Moten, while trying to explain this democracy deficit in the Muslim world, asserts that:

The tragedy of democracy is that those who called themselves enlightened did not spread the idea of self-government around the world, but instead, colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, it is no wonder that the victims of this development identify democracy with aggressive behavior.<sup>103</sup>

Actually, many of the Islamist movements' leaders who have spoken out against democracy were expressing a defensive behavior against further dependence on the West, rather than a wholesale rejection of democracy.<sup>104</sup> Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox point out that the politics of Islam is influenced by the geopolitical forces and by nationalistic and anti-colonial sentiments among many political activists. They also claimed that "if Islam was the dominant religion in Europe while Catholicism dominated in the Middle East, we might instead be pondering the special case of Catholicism instead of Islam."<sup>105</sup>

Hugh Goddard argues that the phrase *hakimiyyat Allah* (sovereignty of God), which does not occur either in the Koran or in *hadith*, is essentially a reaction to

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<sup>101</sup> Steven R. Hofmann, "Islam and Democracy: Micro-Level Indications of Compatibility," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 6 (2004): 658.

<sup>102</sup> Larry Jay Diamond, "Can the Middle East Democratize?" in *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2008): 277.

<sup>103</sup> Christian H. Hoffman, "Islam and Democracy," *Abd al Hadi Publications* (accessed August 24, 2011): 7. [http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam_democracy.pdf)

<sup>104</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, "Democratization and Islam," *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 434.

<sup>105</sup> Michael Minkenberg, "Democracy and Religion: Theoretical and Empirical Observations on the Relationship between Christianity, Islam and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 6 (2007): 902.



secularism as an ideology,<sup>106</sup> and it is understood from the various scholars' writings that many Muslim activists rejection to democracy, such as Sayyid Qutb's treatment towards democracy, was indeed derived from their anti-Western tendencies. For instance, Azam S. Tamimi states that Sayyid Qutb's discourse, like many other Islamist scholars, shows a lack of interest in the origin of democracy or its compatibility with Islamic values. Furthermore, Tamimi asserts that Qutb's understanding of democracy was confused with the attitudes and policies of Western democracies toward the Arab world and Muslim issues.<sup>107</sup>

Of course there are different voices rising from the Muslim World. While conservative Muslims tend to view the Western world's advocacy of human rights as a modern agenda by which the West hopes to establish its hegemony over the Muslim world, many others look to the experience of the secular West as an effort to promote their country's development.<sup>108</sup> Many of the followers of Islam, who tended to look at democracy from a purely theoretical and ideological perspective, have been able to see what democracy provides humanity by switching to the perspective of reality.<sup>109</sup>

Neither communist nor secular or Islamic governments of the Middle Eastern countries delivered considerable solutions to the social and economic needs of their societies. This deficiency caused Muslim intellectuals to start to advocate for democracy and human rights.<sup>110</sup> An important point about democracy advocacy was made in the Cairo Recommendations of May 2003 by the participants of "The Future of the Islamic Nation" conference, organized by the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs. According to their recommendations, all participating Islamic countries were advised to adhere to true

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<sup>106</sup> Hugh Goddard, "Islam and Democracy," *The Political Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (January, 2002): 5.

<sup>107</sup> Azzam S. Tamimi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought." (accessed May, 10, 2011): 12. <http://ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/democracy.htm>

<sup>108</sup> David R. Smock, "Islam and Democracy," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, no. 93 (September 2002): 1. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr93.pdf>

<sup>109</sup> Azzam S. Tamimi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought." (accessed May, 10, 2011): 12. <http://ireland.iol.ie/~afifi/Articles/democracy.htm>

<sup>110</sup> David R. Smock, "Islam and Democracy," *United States Institute of Peace, Special Report*, no. 93 (September 2002): 3. <http://www.usip.org/files/resources/sr93.pdf>

democratic norms—particularly to the free and fair elections—to promote multi-party systems and to eliminate any obstacles while providing a suitable environment for the rotation of power.<sup>111</sup>

Although the debate over the compatibility of Islam and democracy continues among the scholars, the human factor of the democracy deficit is explicitly accepted by most of them. It is obvious that the popular tendency towards democracy is increasing in the Middle East day by day. However, it is almost impossible to understand the reasons for the lack of democracy only through examination of religion and theology.

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<sup>111</sup> Christian H. Hoffman, “Islam and Democracy,” *Abd al Hadi Publications* (accessed August 24, 2011): 10. [http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam\\_democracy.pdf](http://www.abd-al-hadi-publications.com/islam_democracy.pdf)

### III. REASONS FOR THE DEMOCRACY DEFICIT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Having examined the various views of many scholars about the compatibility of Islam and democracy in the previous chapter, it is now more important to focus on the tangible reasons and causes for the democracy deficit in the Middle East beyond ideological and theological factors. It is broadly perceived that authoritarianism has been the salient feature of Arab governance in the 20th century.<sup>112</sup> Despite democratization around the globe, Middle Eastern elites have effectively resisted democracy and, more importantly, they have masked their authoritarianism with the façade of democratic procedures without the substance of democratic rule. This chapter argues, therefore, that the real reason for the hindrance of democracy in the Middle Eastern countries is not Islam, but the rulers themselves and the implementation of their well-planned methods in preventing democratization and its consolidation.

Marina Ottaway refers to “semi-authoritarianism,” which she defines as a system that combines rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, some formal democratic institutions, and a limited sphere of civil society with essentially illiberal or authoritarian traits.<sup>113</sup> Eva Bellin asserts that the prerequisites for democracy, such as a strong civil society, a market-driven economy, adequate income, adequate literacy rates, democratic neighbors, and a democratic culture are lacking in Middle Eastern countries.<sup>114</sup> In addition to lacking many of these prerequisites in the region, such tactics as a coercive state apparatus, economic concessions that are given to elites and the military, or exploitation of an Islamist threat, are followed by regimes in order to keep their authoritarian outlook and hinder any democratization attempt. In addition to these factors,

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<sup>112</sup> See *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, eds. Marsha P. Posusney and Michele P. Angrist (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), and Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D.C., USA: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

<sup>113</sup> Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D.C., USA: Brookings Institution Press, 2003): 3.

<sup>114</sup> Eva Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 141.

while examining Egyptian authoritarianism, Bruce Rutherford summarizes some of the factors that ensure the durability of Egyptian authoritarianism as: control over the media, domination in political life, suppression of opponents through a vast array of legal and extra-legal tools, careful monitoring and manipulation of civil society groups and political parties.<sup>115</sup> Although these factors are not solely sufficient for preventing democratization, the most important and one of the necessary conditions in pursuing authoritarianism and hindering democratization is the will and ambition of the authoritarian rulers. All of the other factors are derivatives of the ruling regimes' consistent authoritarian will and when some of these factors unite with the will of the ruler, they become sufficient, and constitute the ability of Middle Eastern states to hinder the transition to democracy. This chapter presents the main arguments about the factors of durable authoritarianism, concluding with the statement that no single factor is enough for authoritarianism without being enforced with the authoritarian will of the rulers.

One of the main factors that often impedes democracy in the Middle East is state's repressive and coercive capacity. Eva Bellin expresses this robust coercive apparatus as the exceptionalism of the Middle Eastern states. She links the lack or failure of popular revolutionary movements in the Middle East to the strength, coherence, and effectiveness of the state's coercive apparatus.<sup>116</sup> It is typical, in the Middle East, for authority to use its coercive apparatus to ensure the survival of its regime. For example, in Egypt, Syria, or Iraq during the Saddam's regime, the rulers used their countries' police forces and special security organizations to suppress ordinary citizens and their political opponents. In addition to preventing people from going to the ballot boxes during elections, the ruling elites usually interrogated the people who participated in anti-government demonstrations and sent them to prison while some of them were dismissed from their jobs. The most important institutions that are used and have to be controlled by the regimes of the region are generally the military, police, and other security forces. Since these institutions provide the hard power to maintain authoritarian outlook, it is

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<sup>115</sup> Bruce K. Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008): 2.

<sup>116</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 143.

vital for the rulers to have a loyal military or security forces to repress the opponents of the regime. The rulers follow various tactics to keep their control over these forces. For instance, some of the rulers prefer having close ties with the military, while others prefer marginalizing the military purposely and substitute it with loyal parallel military forces and security agencies. The rulers who prefer having close ties with the military follow various ways to do so. Appointing loyalist officers to the strategic positions, frequently rotating the head of these forces, rewarding the military with untouched budgets even during hard economic times, bestowing them with various privileges, transforming them into key economic players and giving them various concessions are only some of the key tactics of the regimes to keep them loyal. For instance, in Egypt, Anwar Sadat's economic policies granted significant benefits and opportunities to the military. They became one of the major industrial players by being granted the right to manufacture military and civilian goods as well.<sup>117</sup> Also, in many of the Middle Eastern states, rulers prefer assuring the military's loyalty by making it a kind of family affair in the country. For instance, in Jordan and Morocco, the king regularly appoints his male relatives to key military posts, while in Syria and Saudi Arabia, an entire branch of military and security forces are among the rulers' family members.<sup>118</sup> In light of these tactics, the military, circumscribed with many concessions or kinship with the ruling elite, hardly poses any challenge to the regime of the main beneficiaries as they are of the authoritarian status quo.<sup>119</sup> For instance, in Egypt, it was broadly accepted that, because of the military's strong dependence on the regime and status quo for the sake of its economic and material interest, it was the most important supporter of the durability of the Egyptian semi-authoritarian regime. In fact, this notion became self-evident during the Arab Spring in 2011 when, after the military drew back its support for the Mubarak regime, it took only a couple of days for the protestors to topple his regime.

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<sup>117</sup> Lisa Blaydes, "Authoritarian Elections and Elite Management: Theory and Evidence from Egypt." Princeton University Conference on Dictatorship (April 2008): 23.

<sup>118</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 149.

<sup>119</sup> Philippe Droz-Vincent, "The Changing Role of Middle Eastern Armies," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 211.

In addition to alliances with the security forces, some of the Middle Eastern rulers prefer marginalizing the regular military and forming their own loyal security forces to protect their regime against its opponents and even against democratization attempts. Frequently, these security forces are formed by rulers in accordance with their members' special loyalties to the rulers or regimes. The most important prerequisites for becoming a member of these parallel military forces are ethnic, religious, or tribal ties to the rulers of the regimes. For instance, in Syria, the senior military officers are appointed according to their relations with the Asad family. And in Libya, Qaddafi placed his relatives in top military and security positions while maintaining security within his government by depending closely on his family members.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, many of these regimes form well-organized security and intelligence agencies as parallel military units in order to preempt any attempt that might challenge their rule and status quo.<sup>121</sup>

In addition to the states' coercive capacities, namely their hard power, these authoritarian regimes also rely on soft power, namely economic institutions such as the public sector, a system of subsidies, and the bureaucracy, to shape the priorities of their citizens by providing them incentives to support the existing order.<sup>122</sup> In this regard, Michael L. Ross argues in his article that oil/gas/mineral resources, rent from strategic transition ways such as the Suez Canal, and international funding for the Middle Eastern states help regimes hinder democracy promotion because these factors provide the ability for the regimes to sustain their authoritarian behavior.<sup>123</sup> He examines the three effects of these rents in Middle Eastern countries and sustaining their authoritarian outlook.

First Ross discusses the "rentier effect," which means that governments use their rent revenues to relieve the social pressures that might lead to demands for greater

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<sup>120</sup> Jason Brownlee, "Political Crisis and Restabilization: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 56.

<sup>121</sup> James T. Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East," *International Security* 24, no. 2 (Fall, 1999): 165.

<sup>122</sup> Bruce K. Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008): 20.

<sup>123</sup> Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 356.

accountability and democracy.<sup>124</sup> These regimes use their wealth to implement low taxation on their citizens, which relieves the tax burden on them and thus prevents the formation of opposition groups. In the Middle East, many rulers have devoted themselves to sustaining their status by providing jobs, subsidies, and social order in return for political quiescence.<sup>125</sup> For instance, in Egypt, in order to maintain the political status quo, the regime needed to regularly distribute state expenditures and privileges toward three social groups: the army, the bourgeoisie, and the state-employed middle class.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, in Saudi Arabia and Libya, governments use their oil wealth for patronage spending programs, which in turn, dampens the latent pressures for democratization.<sup>127</sup> Marsha P. Posusney expresses the importance of taxation by claiming that “If opposition to arbitrary taxation was the engine to democratization in the West, then both patronage and the lack of an onerous tax burden on Middle Eastern populations can account for the presumed failure of citizens of these countries to seek greater participation in government.”<sup>128</sup>

Second, Ross discusses the “repression effect,” which means that governments use their countries’ wealth to build their internal security organizations for suppressing the people’s demand for democracy.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, these authoritarian regimes also need money to sustain their repressive powers by paying the salaries of their security forces regularly, bestowing concessions to them, supplying them with modern arms and so on. It is obvious that when the salaries of the military or security forces cannot be paid, and when they cannot be supplied with arms and ammunition, the coercive apparatus of the

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<sup>124</sup> Michael L. Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 332.

<sup>125</sup> Michael Minkenberg, “Democracy and Religion: Theoretical and Empirical Observations on the Relationship between Christianity, Islam and Liberal Democracy,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 6 (2007): 903.

<sup>126</sup> Thomas Richter, “The Political Economy of Regime Maintenance in Egypt: Linking External Resources and Domestic Legitimation,” in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 178.

<sup>127</sup> Michael L. Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 333.

<sup>128</sup> Marsha P. Posusney, “The Middle East’s Democracy Deficit in Comparative Perspective,” in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 6.

<sup>129</sup> Michael L. Ross, “Does Oil Hinder Democracy?” *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 335.

state will be scattered.<sup>130</sup> Eva Bellin states that, annually \$2 billion of U.S. foreign aid to Egypt gave its government the opportunity to access such resources so that even if the country was in poor economic condition, the state was still able to hew to conventional economic wisdom and give its first priority to paying its military and security forces.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, the defense expenditures of the Middle Eastern Arab countries constitute a big percentage of their total economies. For instance, on average, the countries of the Middle East and North Africa spent 6.7 percent of their GNP on defense expenditures in the year 2000, compared to a global average of 3.8 percent, and 2.2 percent in NATO countries.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, the group consisting of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Algeria purchased 40 percent of global arm sales in the same year.<sup>133</sup>

And, lastly, Michael L. Ross mentions oil's "modernization effect." According to him, this wealth in rentier states makes people less eager to work relative to other countries. Hence, the failure of the population to move into industrial and service jobs renders them less likely to push for democracy.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, this modernization effect also prevents the emergence of a tangible middle-class in a society that is broadly accepted to be one of the main leading groups in the democratization history of Europe.

In addition to Ross's arguments, scholars generally accept that rent revenues support regimes' claims to legitimacy. The most important part of their legitimization is the material legitimization that is closely linked to the rent incomes of the states. For example, Thomas Richter specifies the ways of material legitimization in Egypt as (1) informal legislation that grants military influence on economic affairs and gives privileged access to material resources; (2) business and trade opportunities that grant business elites access

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<sup>130</sup> Eva Bellin, "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 27.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>132</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 147.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 357.



to monopolistic structures; (3) state employment that offers its employees an intermediate level of income and social security; (4) subsidies that provide the basic material needs for the population.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to the rentier effect, especially during the Cold War, the socialist and nationalist policies in the Middle Eastern countries affected the bourgeoisie and hindered its emergence, as it might be the most challenging force against authoritarian regimes. During the Cold war era, in some Arab countries, such as in Algeria and Egypt, the state destroyed the bourgeoisie either because it was foreign and perceived as a colonial remnant, or because it was not ready to invest wholeheartedly in the nationalist heavy-industry projects that the military favored.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, Sandra Halperin asserts that the Western strategy of containing Soviet expansionism during the Cold War produced and maintained dual economic structures that exclude the mass population from economic life; created a narrow range of export goods and few trading partners; caused highly unequal land possessions and income distribution in the Middle East,<sup>137</sup> which actually enabled elites to increase their wealth while limiting access to resources and blocking the growth of new classes.<sup>138</sup> She further summarizes the Cold War's deterrent effects as it defended traditional class structures, restricted the power of working classes, and encouraged the rise of ultra-right, anti-democratic groups, thus consequently preventing the emergence and development of conditions that are associated with democracy in Europe and elsewhere.<sup>139</sup>

On the other hand, particularly after the Cold War, although many of the Middle Eastern Arab countries had introduced more liberal economies, the opportunities offered

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<sup>135</sup> Thomas Richter, "The Political Economy of Regime Maintenance in Egypt: Linking External Resources and Domestic Legitimation," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 183.

<sup>136</sup> Giacomo Luciani, "Economic and Political Reform in the Middle East: The Role of the Bourgeoisie," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 167.

<sup>137</sup> Sandra Halperin, "The Post-Cold War Political Topography of the Middle East: Prospects for Democracy," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 7 (October, 2005): 1145.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 1136.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

by this liberal economy produced corruption in the Middle East. Many of the Middle Eastern regimes undertook economic reforms in response to international pressure, but in most cases hurried and corrupt privatization programs transferred control over major economic assets from government officials to the same people as private entrepreneurs.<sup>140</sup> For instance, in Egypt, during Anwar Sadat's presidency, privatization often transferred assets or control of these assets to the actors and groups close to the state.<sup>141</sup> For this reason, although liberalization of the economy recreated the middle class and bourgeoisie, their existence did not pose a threat to the regime because of their relationship with the government based on mutual interests.

Constitutional powers that are granted to rulers are also a big factor affecting the emergence of democratization. For example, Hamdy A. Hassan asserts that the Egyptian constitution consolidates the president's powers and, as the head of the executive branch, gives him enormous authority. According to Hassan, the president's authority is linked to the legislative power by giving the president the direct authority to issue decrees and resolutions. Furthermore, the president is the head of his political party, which facilitates his legislative authority indirectly. This means that the Assembly, despite its enormous constitutional powers, is a mere rubber stamp in the hands of the president.<sup>142</sup>

Furthermore, martial or emergency laws, which were and are in effect in many Middle Eastern countries, are another source and tool of the regime's authoritarianism. Hamdy A. Hassan argues that the Egyptian security forces performed their task of protecting the regime under the rule of emergency laws. According to Hassan, although these emergency laws were constituted to counter terrorist activities in Egypt, it was not restricted to quelling militant groups, but extended to include the suppression of any peaceful protests organized by various political and social actors.<sup>143</sup> For instance, under

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<sup>140</sup> Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D.C., USA: Brookings Institution Press, 2003): 18.

<sup>141</sup> Eberhard Kienle, "More than a Response to Islamism: The Political Deliberalization of Egypt in the 1990s," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 2 (Spring, 1998): 235.

<sup>142</sup> Hamdy A. Hassan, "State versus Society in Egypt: Consolidating Democracy Or Upgrading Autocracy," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 4, no. 9 (December, 2010): 327.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

the banner of combating terrorism, the Egyptian president and executive branch were given the right to refer civilians to military courts, which were used as a tool to weaken the civilian jurisdiction's authority that started to challenge the regime's authority.<sup>144</sup>

Especially after the end of Cold War, Middle Eastern regimes started to realize that the legitimization of their rule was no longer going to be the Cold War games. Instead, they figured out that they needed to introduce elections in their countries as a “survival strategy”<sup>145</sup> in order to find a new source of legitimization. Lisa Blaydes argues that the notion of elections in the Middle East provides two important ways for rulers to sustain their political, social and economic supremacy. First, with the introduction of elections, authoritarians reaped the benefits associated with liberalization—such as foreign aid, international political support, trading agreements and so on. Second, with elections, the rulers became capable of managing the domestic political elites upon whom they rely for the regime's stability.<sup>146</sup> They use elections as a tool for distributing power, rents, promotions, and access to state resources among the elites. In order to stay in power, the rulers also introduced various tactics to manipulate these elections. For instance, in Egypt, the government controlled various dimensions of elections in the country. With the help of its constitution and electoral law, Bruce Rutherford states that, Egyptian government determined who may register to vote, defined the nature of the electoral campaign including which candidates may participate, the amount of money they may spend, the size or frequency of their rallies, and their degree of access to the media. They also controlled the polling process, including who may have access to the polls, who counts the votes, how the results are announced, and how the electoral outcome is translated into political power.<sup>147</sup> In addition to these methods, when the elections were supervised by the judiciary, as happened in Egypt during 2000 parliamentary elections,

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<sup>144</sup> Eberhard Kienle, “More than a Response to Islamism: The Political Deliberalization of Egypt in the 1990s,” *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 2 (Spring, 1998): 222.

<sup>145</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, “Is the Middle East Democratizing?” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (November, 1999): 202.

<sup>146</sup> Lisa Blaydes, “Authoritarian Elections and Elite Management: Theory and Evidence from Egypt.” *Princeton University Conference on Dictatorship* (April 2008): 1.

<sup>147</sup> Bruce K. Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008): 23.

the regime employed different tactics, such as preventing voters from getting to the polls by using soldiers or government-sponsored thugs.<sup>148</sup> In short, by setting up unfair competition between regimes' and opposition candidates, most of the existing Middle Eastern Arab regimes use manipulated elections as a "safety valve" for regulating social discontent and confining the opposition while reinforcing and prolonging their autocratic rule.<sup>149</sup>

Especially with the help of the regimes' monopolies over the media (although nowadays it is getting harder and harder with the spread of mass communication devices) they are able to easily manipulate public opinion. Incumbent regimes use state-controlled television and radio to ensure ample and sympathetic coverage of the government's activities, which are reflected to the population as very favorable for them.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, Middle Eastern governments monopolized the production and distribution of information through censorship, ownership, licensure, national federations, and other mechanisms designed to limit political and intellectual activism.<sup>151</sup> For instance, Eberhard Kienle asserts that during the election campaigns in Egypt, news bulletins on state-controlled television left Egyptians with the impression that the National Democratic Party (NDP) was the only party running for election because opposition parties were granted only a few short slots for their campaign statements.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, the governments in Algeria and Tunisia relieved some of the pressure on dissemination of information and censorship during their introduction of "controlled" liberalization<sup>153</sup> in order to attract the Western world, after the collapse of Soviet Russia, without letting the media pose any threat to

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<sup>148</sup> Marsha P. Posusney, "Multiparty Elections in the Arab World: Election Rules and Opposition Responses," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 105.

<sup>149</sup> Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 8.

<sup>150</sup> Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D.C., USA: Brookings Institution Press, 2003): 152.

<sup>151</sup> Sheila Carapico, "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *The Middle East Journal* 56, no. 3 (Summer, 2002): 391.

<sup>152</sup> Eberhard Kienle, "More than a Response to Islamism: The Political Deliberalization of Egypt in the 1990s," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 2 (Spring, 1998): 226.

<sup>153</sup> Sheila Carapico, "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *The Middle East Journal* 56, no. 3 (Summer, 2002): 391.

their authority and status-quos. In addition to the manipulation of media by laws, the Middle Eastern Arab regimes intimidate, sue, or even arrest editors and reporters they see as enemies of their authority, while they woo those perceived as supporters of their regimes by establishing close relations that enhance these journalists' importance.<sup>154</sup>

Apart from election fraud and other political manipulation tactics, the real basis of state power in Middle Eastern Arab countries is derived from the informal and un-institutional personal, family and group ties that help sustain the executive power of the ruling elites.<sup>155</sup> Political introduction of tribes, ethnicity, regionalism, kinship and sectarianism to the electoral process affected the natural growth of other kinds of associations that are vital for healthy democratization and encouraged the process of fragmentation in Arab societies.<sup>156</sup> The political process in the region was corrupted by the regimes by putting personal allegiance to the rulers at the forefront of prerequisites for ascendance in the political and social arenas. Thus, institutional regulations and political competitiveness diminished considerably in these countries.<sup>157</sup> In addition, ethnic divisions in society also pose a barrier to democratization in several Arab countries such as Jordan, where sectarian divisions in society are reflected in mal-apportioned electoral districts that weaken the legitimacy of the legislature itself.<sup>158</sup>

Iliya Harik argues that in the Arab world, authoritarian relations first prevail in family relations, then in one's religious community and finally within the people's social relations. While linking this authoritarian outlook of the states to this authoritarian form of civil society, she further elaborates that in many Arab countries, the governments' primary responsibility in education, health, housing, and industrial development is

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<sup>154</sup> Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D.C., USA: Brookings Institution Press, 2003): 153.

<sup>155</sup> Ali R. Abootalebi, "Islam, Islamists, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (March, 1999): 19. <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1999/issue1/abootalebi.pdf>

<sup>156</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Is the Middle East Democratizing?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (November, 1999): 203.

<sup>157</sup> Hamdy A. Hassan, "State versus Society in Egypt: Consolidating Democracy or Upgrading Autocracy," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 4, no. 9 (December, 2010): 321.

<sup>158</sup> Marsha P. Posusney, "The Middle East's Democracy Deficit in Comparative Perspective," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 4.

directly related to the large empty space left by the civil society.<sup>159</sup> In addition to the legacy of these statist ideologies, with the help of rent-fueled opportunities in the region, the capacity to build autonomous and countervailing organizations in the society has been undermined.<sup>160</sup>

The lack of powerful and effective institutions in the Middle East causes a lack of horizontal and vertical accountability for the rulers, which in turn leads to durable authoritarianism. Eberhard Kienle discusses that although there have been some institutional reforms in the Middle East, these reforms have never fostered the emergence of autonomous institutions or freed the existing institutions from the central control which in turn, might hold regimes accountable for their actions. He claims that the reason for this is that democracy promoters insufficiently reinforced these institutions, which are supposed to contain and channel action towards democratic outcomes.<sup>161</sup> But contrary to this notion, in Turkey, the most important characteristic has been the foundation of durable institutions that are capable of questioning the government while holding them accountable for their policies and their actions.

For this reason, in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, although their regimes introduced some kind of liberal policies in their countries, an insufficient promotion of democracy in terms of building autonomous institutions strengthened the hands of authoritarian regimes and led to easy manipulation of these institutions. In accordance with the manipulation of the institutions, one can cite the intimate relations between some civil society groups and the government as an example for the hindrance of democratization in the Middle East. Since the hegemony of the ruling parties have never been weakened by the introduction of new reforms, they have kept their influence over many institutions and civil society organizations by using their legislative and executive privileges. Moreover, by using their monopoly on state resources, they easily drew any

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<sup>159</sup> Iliya Harik, "Rethinking Civil Society: Pluralism in the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July, 1994): 45.

<sup>160</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 139.

<sup>161</sup> Eberhard Kienle, "Democracy Promotion and Renewal of Authoritarian Rule," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 246.

opposition groups to their side by either penetrating them or directly bringing them under government control. For instance, in Algeria, Egypt, and Syria, trade unions became partners in single-party regimes by giving up the right to strike in return for special favors granted them by the ruling regimes.<sup>162</sup>

According to Vickie Langohr, when NGOs and their formations are compared to political parties, the limitations on party formation and activity have generally been stricter than NGOs, and NGOs have been able to raise money much more easily. She claims that these factors have helped to make advocacy NGOs, not parties, the most vocal secular oppositions in the Middle East, but since these advocacy NGOs generally advocate the interests of a specific group or the importance of a particular principle, they are ill-equipped to mobilize a large number of supporters around the ultimate goal of regime change.<sup>163</sup> In addition, NGOs are also founded and used by Middle Eastern rulers to counter the influence of anti-regime NGOs. For instance, the Jordanian royal family and the former First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak of Egypt, became prominent NGO figures in the region whose actual intent was to gather support among ordinary people for the government by using the NGOs as a tool for this purpose. Also, members of Yemen's ruling party founded human rights and elections-monitoring organizations in order to compete with those initiated by the opposition.<sup>164</sup>

The lack of popular mobilization in the Middle East is also considered another factor that strengthens the will and capacity of authoritarian rulers. Iliya Harik writes:

If there is a single overriding reason why liberalization and democratization measures have been so slow in making progress in most

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<sup>162</sup> Iliya Harik, "Rethinking Civil Society: Pluralism in the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July, 1994): 48.

<sup>163</sup> Vickie Langohr, "Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics? Egypt and Other Liberalizing Arab Regimes," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 195.

<sup>164</sup> Sheila Carapico, "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *The Middle East Journal* 56, no. 3 (Summer, 2002): 392.

of the Arab world, it is that they were introduced at the pleasure of governments and for reasons of state, and not because pleasure from civil society.<sup>165</sup>

Various reasons can be given for this shortage. Eva Bellin refers to the history of the region and claims that experiments in political liberalization are historically identified with colonial domination rather than the self-determination of the people.<sup>166</sup> According to her, since the introduction of Western values and the liberalization of Western colonialist states were more window-dressing than experiments of self-rule, Western countries' efforts and pressures for democracy promotion cause reactions against foreign interference in the region. For example, the family awareness programs which were tried to implement by the Middle Eastern governments were perceived by many of the population as a Western tactic to contain the numerical strength of Muslims or their respective national communities.<sup>167</sup> Unquestionably, this notion derives from the common history of the colonization of Middle Eastern people by Western countries in the past. For this reason, whether Islamists, nationalists, or liberals, political movements in the region share the suspicion that the Western attitude toward democracy promotion in the Middle East is only a means of achieving hegemonic political ends.<sup>168</sup> Consequently, Eberhard Kienle expresses the result of this perception, in his article, that even potential beneficiaries of the reforms in the region oppose democracy promotion and gather around their existing authoritarian rulers against the anticipated foreign interference,<sup>169</sup> which, in turn, contributes to the consolidation of the state's authoritarian outlook.

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<sup>165</sup> Iliya Harik, "Rethinking Civil Society: Pluralism in the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July, 1994): 50.

<sup>166</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 150.

<sup>167</sup> Eberhard Kienle, "Democracy Promotion and Renewal of Authoritarian Rule," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 240.

<sup>168</sup> Dietrich Jung, "Democratizing the Middle East: A Means of Ensuring International Security or an End in itself?" in *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East*, ed. Dietrich Jung (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 182.

<sup>169</sup> Eberhard Kienle, "Democracy Promotion and Renewal of Authoritarian Rule," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 239.



Iliya Harik goes further and claims that Arab intellectuals' ideologies and their career considerations caused them to be ambivalent about democracy. According to Harik, since these intellectuals were the major allies of socialist and nationalist regimes, they asserted that liberalization would widen the gap between classes by working against the poor and favoring the rich.<sup>170</sup> For these reasons, he asserts that most Arab intellectuals remained government employees and did not participate in forming groups in which they might freely express their views and challenge the regime's durable authority. Moreover, Arab business elites prefer participating in sectoral groups, such as chambers of commerce, rather than political parties, because authoritarian regimes are controlling most business opportunities and the formation of political parties, which might be perceived as opposition and could jeopardize their access to various economic opportunities.<sup>171</sup> On the other hand, when these business elites participate in the political life of their countries, they prefer making their own deals with no systemic interest in reform, while enjoying protection from prosecution for corruption.<sup>172</sup>

Another reason for the lack of popular mobilization and the reluctance of opposition parties toward democracy in many countries, especially in the secular states, is the Islamist threat. In the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East, the failure of contemporary ideological regimes to satisfy the needs of their population led to a religious revival. They associate the failure of their governments with the failure of secularism and of the Western path,<sup>173</sup> which in turn led to the ascendance of Islamist ideology in the region. But, in fact, before the political and ideological ascendance of these Islamist organizations, some of the Middle Eastern regimes tried to use and encourage the emergence of various extremist organizations (including the Islamists) against the moderate pro-democracy groups. Ellen Lust-Okar explains this tactic by

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<sup>170</sup> Iliya Harik, "Rethinking Civil Society: Pluralism in the Arab World," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (July, 1994): 49.

<sup>171</sup> Vickie Langohr, "Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics? Egypt and Other Liberalizing Arab Regimes," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 206.

<sup>172</sup> Lisa Blaydes, "Authoritarian Elections and Elite Management: Theory and Evidence from Egypt" (Princeton University, 2008): 11. <https://www.princeton.edu/~piirs/Dictatorships042508/Blaydes.pdf>

<sup>173</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "Islam, Democracy, and Constitutional Liberalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 11.

asserting that authoritarian leaders, in order to stay in power, use informal mechanisms, such as fragmenting and moderating political opposition groups, or strengthening ideologically radical but weaker political opponents to create a threat to the regime's moderate enemies.<sup>174</sup> For instance, she asserts that in Morocco the king allowed the Islamist movement to grow as an antidote to the leftist and secularist opposition groups. While doing this, he sought to keep Islamists strong enough to threaten the left wing opposition but weak enough not to challenge his rule.<sup>175</sup>

Similar to these tactics, nowadays, while some countries encourage the growth of non-Islamist forces as an antidote to the Islamists, for example, others have manipulated the constitution and/or electoral systems to prevent institutional growth of Islamist forces.<sup>176</sup> Due to the manipulation of the constitution and electoral procedures, political participation of many of the Islamists were restricted in many countries, whereas in some countries they were just not allowed to form political parties. However, this situation caused different types of setbacks in the democratization process in the region. For instance in Jordan, Yemen and Egypt, independent candidates usually got the majority of the non-ruling party seats as independent representatives because they were not allowed to form political parties or their parties had been banned by the government. On the other hand, this independent candidacy also weakened their oppositional stand against the incumbent rulers and strengthened the durability of the existing ruling parties because the prevalence of independent candidacy in elections prevented the development of party programs that would constitute a clear alternative to the ruling party.<sup>177</sup>

Another problem that Islamists' ascendance causes in the Middle Eastern Arab countries is the threat that is perceived by some of the members of the society. Since

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<sup>174</sup> Ellen Lust-Okar, "The Management of Opposition: Formal Structures of Contestation and Informal Political Manipulation in Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 48, 49.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>176</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Is the Middle East Democratizing?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (November, 1999): 215.

<sup>177</sup> Vickie Langohr, "Too Much Civil Society, Too Little Politics? Egypt and Other Liberalizing Arab Regimes," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 205.

promoting democracy in these states would lead to an anticipated Islamist ascendance, the secular and educated elements of the middle class often unwillingly mobilizes to support democratization.<sup>178</sup> For instance, in Egypt, Bruce K. Rutherford claims that the Muslim Brotherhood's vagueness regarding their political goals, their lack of clarity on basic issues such as regime type and government style produced deep anxiety among secular Egyptians, who feared that the Muslim Brotherhood might try to create a strict Islamic order after they managed to come to the power. Hence, faced with this prospect, many secular Egyptians threw their support behind the regime despite its long history of repression<sup>179</sup> and tried to expand their own legal space as opposition parties by marginalizing the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>180</sup> Actually, this same situation also exists in the other Middle Eastern countries who share the same secular, anti-fundamentalist stance with Egypt. For instance, the banning of Tunisia's Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) or the preemptive military coup against Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front's (FIS) victory in elections all derived from the vagueness of these Islamist parties' real intentions and the secularists' anxieties toward them.

With regard to international support, authoritarian states in the Middle East profited from the Cold War by gaining patronage from contemporary great powers in return for their reliable alliances in the fight for or against communism.<sup>181</sup> The Arab-Israeli conflict also bolstered the Arab regimes' political hegemony by legitimizing their authoritarianism and providing an excuse for their socioeconomic failures.<sup>182</sup> In addition to this, the Arab-Israeli conflict also contributed to the reluctance of the region's people toward democracy from another perspective. Even the liberal Arabs perceived the

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<sup>178</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 151.

<sup>179</sup> Bruce K. Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008): 92.

<sup>180</sup> Michele Dunne, Amr Hamzawy and Nathan J. Brown, "Egypt: Don't Give Up on Democracy Promotion." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief*, no.52 (July 2007): 3.

<sup>181</sup> Eva Bellin, "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 32, 33.

<sup>182</sup> Ali R. Abootalebi, "Islam, Islamists, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (March, 1999): 16. <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1999/issue1/abootalebi.pdf>

pro-democracy claims of the United States as hypocritical, expressing what they see as American indifference to the rights of the Palestinians and unconditional support for Israel.<sup>183</sup>

Even after the end of the Cold War, many of the Middle Eastern states have continued to receive Western support due to Western policymakers' beliefs that stable authoritarian regimes would be useful for their national interests, such as assuring regular oil/gas supplies and containing the Islamist threat. Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, the U.S. government has increasingly believed that if Islamist groups come to power in the Middle East, they would pursue a more confrontational policy toward the United States and its key national interests in the region would suffer.<sup>184</sup> Having known this for many years, Middle Eastern Arab regimes have maintained their authoritarian outlook by playing on the West's multiple security concerns and, in doing so, retaining international support for their regimes.<sup>185</sup> Particularly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, the declaration of the War on Terror by President George W. Bush also reinforced the position of the authoritarian rulers of the Middle Eastern states and offered a new source of legitimization for the regimes' extralegal practices.<sup>186</sup> These regimes have harnessed the fear of fundamentalist-inspired terrorism and instability in order to justify their one-party rule and relieve external pressure for political reform.<sup>187</sup> For instance, the Iraq War gave an excuse to regimes such as Egypt to limit the political space more as a defensive tactic against terrorist activities. In short, the U.S.' war on terrorism gave a green light to Middle Eastern regimes to crack down on political opposition movements

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<sup>183</sup> Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, "Middle East Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 145 (November-December, 2004): 23.

<sup>184</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma." *CRS Report for Congress* (2006): 3.

<sup>185</sup> Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 149.

<sup>186</sup> Jason Brownlee, "The Decline of Pluralism in Mubarak's Egypt," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (October, 2002): 13.

<sup>187</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, "U.S. Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma." *CRS Report for Congress* (2006): 4.

in the region.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, when the domestic perspective of the United States' intervention in the region is considered, for instance, justification of the Iraq War as a democratizing mission has discredited many liberal, pro-democracy Arab thinkers in the eyes of their own people since people started to view democracy as a code word for United States' regional domination.<sup>189</sup>

In addition to the Islamist threat perceived by the West, Western countries also feel skeptical about the outcomes of democracy in the Middle East. Nowadays, whether Islamist or nationalist the opposition voices arising from the Middle East show that they mainly have an anti-Western attitude in their actions and rhetoric. For this reason, for the sake of their interests in the region, many Western countries prefer a pro-Western authoritarian regime instead of an anti-Western democratic regime. For this purpose, they continue supporting and aiding the existing authoritarian regimes, which consolidate these regimes' strength and their ability to maintain an authoritarian apparatus despite challenges. Mustapha K. Sayyid comments on this foreign support: "Aware that the big global players prefer them (authoritarian rulers) to their Islamist or nationalist counterparts and resigned to the democracy discourse emanating from the capitals of the United States and Western Europe, they have decided to play the game by pretending to introduce reforms while not conceding a single inch of real power to their serious rivals."<sup>190</sup> Moreover, Eva Bellin, after mentioning the international support that was given to the Mubarak regime, claimed that withdrawal of international aid would trigger both an existential and financial crisis, which in turn, would devastate the regime's capacity for authoritarianism.<sup>191</sup> In short, the decades-long state-centered policies of

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<sup>188</sup> Jason Brownlee, "Political Crisis and Restabilization: Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Tunisia," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 60.

<sup>189</sup> Marina Ottaway and Thomas Carothers, "Middle East Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 145 (November-December, 2004): 24.

<sup>190</sup> Mustapha K. Sayyid, "International Dimensions of Middle Eastern Authoritarianism," in *Debating Arab Authoritarianism: Dynamics and Durability in Nondemocratic Regimes*, ed. Oliver Schlumberger (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007): 229.

<sup>191</sup> Eva Bellin, "Coercive Institutions and Coercive Leaders," in *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, ed. Posusney Marsha P. Angrist, Michele P. (USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005): 27, 28.

Western governments have contributed to stabilizing and fueling the modern patronage of the authoritarian and/or semi-authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes.<sup>192</sup>

In addition to the United States' support for authoritarian regimes in the region, its aid programs that grant foreign money to many civil society organizations in the Middle East are also manipulated by the incumbents. Because of the laws that regulate the distribution of this foreign aid and due to the regimes' attitudes toward the organizations that accept foreign money, many civil society organizations abstain from taking it, while those that accept foreign grants with the blessing of their ruling regimes become part of the patronage system rather than independent representatives of civil society.<sup>193</sup>

Although Middle Eastern semi-authoritarian and authoritarian rulers allowed some reforms in terms of the liberalization in their countries, they are literally aiming at “window dressing” in order to prevent foreign intervention and alleviate domestic upheaval. While many authoritarian rulers carry out such liberal reforms to deceive the rest of the world, they managed to find different ways to sustain their authoritarian rule. Fiscal health, for example, serves the durability of authoritarianism in the Middle Eastern Arab states. Whether the money comes from hydrocarbon resources, transit ways or foreign aid, it has always been necessary for the regimes' coercive apparatus. Lack of institutions that can hold the regimes accountable for their actions and regimes' close ties with their security forces, whose close relationship with political rulers depends on their mutual interests, contribute to the hindrance of democratization in the region. However, in Turkey, the foundation of such institutions guarantees the continuity of the rule of law, which sets barriers to the excessive use of government's coercive apparatus, and in return, consolidates the Turkish democracy. Moreover, the constitutionalism and its fair implementation in Turkey hinders any probable “close” relation between the rulers and the security forces, as it is in the Middle Eastern countries.

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<sup>192</sup> Dietrich Jung, “Democratizing the Middle East: A Means of Ensuring International Security Or an End in itself?” in *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East*, ed. Dietrich Jung (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 183.

<sup>193</sup> Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington, D.C., USA: Brookings Institution Press, 2003): 50.

In addition to these tactics, cleverly implementing the policy of “the enemy of my enemy is my ally” tactic can also be considered one of the vital policies of the regimes in sustaining their power. However, none of these factors are sufficient for the authoritarian ruler’s undemocratic strategies. Actually the most important factor and one of the necessary conditions for explaining the ability of hindering genuine transitions to democracy in Middle Eastern countries is the authoritarian rulers’ ambitions to sustain their authoritarian rule despite the pressures of the democracy promoters in and out of their countries. When all of the aforementioned factors combine with the ruler’s will of repression, then it can cause decades-long authoritarianism, rooted deeply in the region’s political and social life.

One can conclude that, compounded with the states’ social, political, and economic conditions, it is the ruling elites’ unwillingness to share their authority that stands as the greatest reason for the lack of democratization in the Middle East. Once this unwillingness is overcome by ordinary people, whether in peaceful ways or not, the best candidate states for reform and democracy will be those that are the most broadly based and least sectarian, the most susceptible to the influence of international markets and financial institutions, and the least dependent on oil rents for their foreign-exchange revenues.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Henri Barkey, “Can the Middle East Compete?” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 2 (April, 1995): 124.

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## IV. TURKEY'S DEMOCRATIZATION HISTORY

After expressing the compatibility of Islam and democracy in the second chapter, and examining the main tangible reasons for the democracy deficit in the Middle Eastern countries in the third, this chapter examines the Turkish example of the democratization process, which rises as a unique example among the predominantly Muslim countries. It is important for us to examine the Turkish example because among all the modern states that emerged from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, only Turkey evolved competitive political institutions.<sup>195</sup> This supports the argument that the specific example of Turkey provides a good example of how democracy can take root and flourish in a predominantly Muslim yet secular country.<sup>196</sup> The evolution of anti-democratic political powers constitutes a good example that is worth emulating by Middle Eastern countries. One can assert that in addition to Turkey's democratic institutions' effectiveness in protecting the democratic form of the state, the inclusion of anti-democratic powers in the political arena forced them to moderate their rhetoric and actions in order to gain the support of mainstream Turkish voters and to stay in politics. The steps toward democracy in Turkey did not start with its foundation in 1923. Actually it has been a long process that emerged during the late Ottoman Empire and lasts until the present day. This chapter addresses the process of Turkish democratization in three periods, starting with the Ottoman era, and continues with the one-party and multi-party era.

### A. OTTOMAN ERA

Beginning in the nineteenth-century, the Ottoman Empire started to realize its power reduction *vis-a-vis* European countries. This realization was continued with the demands to keep up with the modern era. This was a time of closer contact with the West through the study of language, in the form of merchants, educators, and increasingly military and naval personnel, and the beginnings of a significant Muslim, chiefly

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<sup>195</sup> Michele Penner Angrist, "Party Systems and Regime Formation in the Modern Middle East: Explaining Turkish Exceptionalism," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 229.

<sup>196</sup> Ziya Öniş, "The Political Economy of Islam and Democracy in Turkey: From the Welfare Party to the AKP," in *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East*, ed. Jung Dietrich (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 123.

Ottoman presence in European countries.<sup>197</sup> With these contacts between Western society and the Turkish intellectuals and with the spread of higher education and wealth, there came to be a large and vocal middle class, important parts of which no longer regarded a strong religious identity and a modern way of life as incompatible.<sup>198</sup> The Ottoman Empire adopted many different measures as it sought to reform and Westernize during the 18th and 19th centuries. In order to defend itself from Western imperialism, these reforms' common purpose was to strengthen the state authority and to centralize the administration. To arrest the decline of the Empire, the highest priority in reforms was given to military reorganization and tax structure.<sup>199</sup> In addition to the reforms in the military and the economy, which started in the late 18th century and continued until the end of the Empire, there had been unprecedented reforms in terms of education, finance, law, bureaucracy and many others.<sup>200</sup>

The first serious attempts at reforms and closer contacts with Europe started with the reign of Sultan Selim III. Beginning in the 18th century, the capitulations, which were the political and economic concessions given to some of the European countries, were started as tools to intervene in the Empire's domestic politics. Moreover, inside the Empire, the state structure was so highly decentralized that the notables (*ayans*) in far provinces, whom the central government relied on in terms of tax collection and supplying troops, were acting as if they were separate entities.<sup>201</sup> The Janissary troops were so corrupt and worthless that, as Eric Zürcher states, "they were strong enough to terrorize the government and population but too weak to defend the Empire against its internal and external enemies."<sup>202</sup> In order to overcome these corruptions and decline,

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<sup>197</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the Only Muslim Democracy," *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March, 1994): 41.

<sup>198</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 282.

<sup>199</sup> Serif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, eds. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993): 351.

<sup>200</sup> Carter V. Findley, "The Tanzimat," in *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism and Modernity: A History* (USA: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>201</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 16.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Sultan Selim launched the program of reforms called *Nizam-i Cedid* (New Order) during the late 18th century. The main expected outcome of these reforms was to increase the palace's strength against external and internal enemies, to modernize the armed forces, and to regulate tax collection by combating corruption. Firstly, he attempted to make the existing corps more efficient by reorganizing it. He created a new army that was relatively well equipped and trained. He recruited French officers as instructors and advisers through the French government. A modern medical service and school were established. The Naval engineering school was modernized and an equivalent for the army was established. Their students learned French and started to meet with the new ideologies that were also affecting the European intelligentsia during that period. These cadets who would graduate from these secular and modern schools were going to form the backbone of the constitutional movement in the next century. Sultan Selim, for the first time, established permanent embassies in Europe. These embassies facilitated communication with Europe and emerging ideas started to dispense from the continent to the Empire more quickly. These reforms, especially military reforms and the influence of Europe, particularly the French, over the Empire alienated the Janissary troops and *ulema* (clergy). Moreover, new taxes, which were introduced in order to finance modernization efforts, also infuriated the population. Consequently, in 1807, with the help of the Janissary troops' riot, the Sultan was deposed by the religious decree of *Şeyhülislam* (the head of the clergy) who stated that the Sultan's reforms were incompatible with *Şeriat* (Islamic law).

Although the Janissaries and the *ulema* achieved their goals by deposing their reformist Sultan, his successor to the throne, Mahmut II, was also determined to reform the Empire. During the early years of his reign, Sultan Mahmut, with the help of a prominent *ayan*, Bayraktar Mustafa Pasha, continued the reforms of Selim III. For this purpose, all major *ayans* of the Empire gathered in Istanbul for a conference to discuss the problems of the Empire. In 1808, they agreed on a document called *Sened-i İttifak* (Charter of Alliance), which is considered the first attempt at constitutionalism in the

Ottoman Empire.<sup>203</sup> With this document, for the first time, the political authority of the Sultan was to be shared with the other parties in the Empire.

Thereafter, he increased his efforts to strengthen the state through military, administrative and fiscal reforms.<sup>204</sup> In order to centralize the state's administration, Sultan Mahmut abolished the old tax collecting system and tax collectors began to be appointed directly by the Porte (the government of the Ottoman Empire). Moreover, to strengthen central control over the provinces, he embarked on improving the communication system by introducing a new postal system and constructing new roads. He abolished the corrupt Janissary troops with its new army called *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (The Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad). He created a new position for the head of army, named *Serasker*, in order to put the entire military under the same command. With the abolishment of the Janissary troops, the *ulema* lost its power, thus Sultan Mahmut reduced their influence by putting them into a hierarchical system and bringing the holdings of religious foundations under the government's control. Similar to Sultan Selim, this time Sultan Mahmut invited Prussian instructors to train Ottoman officers. He also initiated bureaucratic reforms in the Porte. The authority of grand vizier was divided among his subordinates so the first ministries in Ottoman history were founded. He created an advisory supreme council called *Meclis-i Vala-i Ahkam-i Adliye* to deal with the growing burden of legislation his reforms entailed.<sup>205</sup> A translation office was founded where many Ottoman statesmen began their careers..<sup>206</sup> In addition to these reforms, in the civilian education system, for the first time a small group of students was sent to Europe for training purposes, which later on contributed to the foundation of reformist and constitutionalist intelligentsia in the Empire.

After the reign of Sultan Mahmut II, on 3 November 1839, *Tanzimat fermani* (Imperial Edict of Reorganization) was announced by Sultan Abdulmecid's grand vizier Mustafa Reşit Pasha as a continuity of the previous reforms. Its basic reforms were the

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<sup>203</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 28.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 44.

establishment of guarantees for life, honor and property of the sultan's subjects; the construction of fair taxation; introduction of equality before the law for all subjects; and limiting the conscription to a maximum four or five years. The expected outcomes of its promulgation were to regain the old strength of the Empire by introducing new reforms, preventing foreign intervention, stopping the growth of nationalism and separatism among minorities, and uniting all non-Muslims with the Empire. Following its declaration, non-Muslims were also required to serve in the military as Muslims did unless they chose to pay a special tax in order to be exempted from that service. Moreover, provincial armies were founded with their own provincial commands and put under the same command of *Serakser* in the capital. During this era, because of the introduction of new ministries into the state bureaucracy, the center of power clearly shifted from the palace to the bureaucrats of the Porte.<sup>207</sup> Although, in accordance with the *Tanzimat* Edict, a new taxation system had been introduced, it was changed to its previous form due to the Empire's inadequate resources and the *ayans'* intervention in the tax collection system. In 1843, a new penal code was introduced. The death penalty for apostasy was abolished, foreigners were allowed to own land in the Empire, and new secular courts were established in order to deal with cases involving non-Muslims.<sup>208</sup> Moreover, many new European style secular schools, such as *Mektep-i Mülkiye* (civil service school), were founded and a new secular school system was introduced in addition to the existing traditional Islamic schools.

The *Tanzimat* edict was followed by the promulgation of *Islahat Fermani* (The Imperial Reform Edict) in 1856, which was actually an affirmation of the previous edict. With its declaration, the equality of all religions before law was redefined more precisely and discrimination of people according to their religion and ethnicity was prohibited. During this era, a new group called the Young Ottomans emerged. This group played a major role by supporting the idea of a parliamentary system and opposing the superficial imitations of Europe without regard to the traditional Ottoman and Islamic cultures.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 57.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 61

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 68.

Due to the pressures of this emerging group and to prevent Russia's pan-Slavist ambitions in the Balkans, Sultan Abdulhamid II was forced to promulgate the *Kanun-i Esasi* (the Ottoman's first constitution) on 23 December 1876. Following its declaration, the first parliament in the Empire's history was founded. However, the parliament was very short lived. Asserting its defeat in the 1877–78 Ottoman-Russian War, it was abolished by the sultan only two years after its foundation. However, during Abdulhamid's reign, many reforms in education and the military continued to take place as they were started during the *Tanzimat* era. As a continuity of the previous era, central power was strengthened during this period, especially with the introduction of the telegraph and construction of many new railways. Furthermore, tax collection became more efficient with the creation of the Public Debt Administration and the rule of law started to be implemented more efficiently. On the other hand, censorship that was implemented by the sultan in order to silence the opposition lessened the number of newspapers and publications. The power that had been in the hands of Porte during the *Tanzimat* era shifted back to the sultan. Although the constitution was not abolished and the equality of people was still in effect, Sultan Abdulhamid, contrary to his predecessors, emphasized Islam as a uniting sentiment in the Empire because nationalism was starting to prevail among the Arab population as well. Since Prussia supported the Sultan's pan-Islamist ideas, in accordance with its rivalry with other colonial European countries, Prussia's influence among the Ottoman army also continued to increase.<sup>210</sup>

After the dissolution of parliament, a 30-year long despotic regime was pursued under Abdulhamid's rule. On the other hand, as a result of *Tanzimat* era reforms, which caused education to become modernized, secularized and westernized, a new group called the "Young Turks" emerged during this period. Their rhetoric influenced the ideas of Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which was founded in Paris by an exiled patriotic group. The CUP, whose main goal was to reinstate a constitutional system and parliament, was taking its power from officers serving in the Ottoman army who were also educated in Western style schools with new ideas. With the help of these officers, CUP managed to force the sultan to promulgate a new constitution and reinstate

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<sup>210</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 82.

parliament in 1908 after a 30-year interval. With this constitutional revolution, the power of the Sultan was again taken away and vested in the legislature and the cabinet.<sup>211</sup> The main policies of CUP reflected the same kind of reforms during the preceding eras. The Young Turks were advocating secularist and modernist ideas that disturbed the *ulema* as it had been in the *Tanzimat* era and even before it. During this second constitutional era, CUP embarked on overcoming the problem of corruption and politicization in the army. They changed the whole rank promotion system in order to eliminate the uneducated officers. They tried to inject a European, particularly Prussian, form to the army.<sup>212</sup> They changed some articles of the constitution, and by reducing the Sultan's authority decisively, they strengthened the central authority. They secularized the Empire by removing *Şeyhülislam* from the cabinet. *Şeriat* courts were brought under the control of the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Religious Foundations was founded in order to control the charitable foundations. The *Medreses'* (Theological schools) curriculum was changed and modernized. Primary education was made compulsory for girls as well as boys. The outbreak of World War I gave Porte the opportunity to abolish the capitulations,<sup>213</sup> which had been some of the main obstacles against the implementation of reforms. In the political arena, many opposition and rivalry parties were allowed to emerge.

In summary, beginning in the late 18th century and until the outbreak of World War I, because the palace and Porte saw that the only way to save the Empire was to adopt the European style reforms they had pursued these consistently in the Empire. It is certain that the constitutional revolution of 1908 modernized the Empire with its society more than the previous eras, but the CUP's secret alliances with the Germans before the outbreak of World War I and their significant influence over Ottoman politics would cause the end of a more than 600-year-old Empire. Following defeat in the Great War, the Ottoman dynasty and prominent members of CUP started to lose power and a new

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<sup>211</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2003): 55.

<sup>212</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 98.

<sup>213</sup> Feroz Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908-18," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, eds. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993): 127.

leader, Mustafa Kemal, emerged in Anatolia, who then led the Independence War and created modern Turkey from the ashes of an old empire.

## **B. ONE PARTY ERA**

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who is the founder of the Turkish Republic and earned his reputation in the field during the First World War and the Independence War, had realized that the Western world had decisively proven itself superior to the Ottoman Empire, hence, in order to avoid defeat at the hands of a superior culture, Turkey would have to adapt itself to the West.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, particularly after the Great War, since Middle Eastern countries had lost their independences to Britain and France, and because they were incapable of acting independently, there was no use for Turkey to turn its face toward them.<sup>215</sup> For these reasons, after victory in the Independence War, Atatürk started to build a nation-state based on modernization and economic development, for which he chose Europe as a model for his country, as the Ottoman Sultans had done before him. So in his revolution, he adopted not only the materialism of the West but also its ideas, so that Turkish society would be transformed in the broadest sense.<sup>216</sup>

According to Richard Robinson, the process of change was slow and faltering during the early years of the republic. He describes the step-by-step development of the Turkish revolution in four steps. First, he asserts that, many of the symbols and continuity of traditions that had prevented the development of Turkish civilization were destroyed by the force of the government, and then law and order were spread in the country by establishing a secular judiciary and abolishing Islamic courts. Second, in order to have a rapid increase in literacy and national consciousness, education and nationalism were promoted. Moreover, education was secularized and aligned with scientific forms as in Western countries. Third, the economic development of the country was pursued by mobilizing all possible resources in order to industrialize and mechanize production. With the emergence of state-sponsored industry, significant numbers of people from rural

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<sup>214</sup> Susanna Dökupil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 65.

<sup>215</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2003): 89.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.



areas were taken into direct contact with the machine age,<sup>217</sup> which in return led to the emergence of an intellectual, educated, and proficient work force in the country. And lastly, liberal political institutions—such as tolerance of opposition, free press, free speech, free and fair elections, peaceful transfer of political power—were established.<sup>218</sup> Many of these steps were taken by Atatürk and his successors in a step-by-step manner. Since the early introduction of liberalism and democratization to the society would cause these features to be used by anti-system powers to destroy the new republic, total democracy was not introduced until the minds of the people matured and a sufficient political, educational, and economic level was achieved.

For Atatürk and his close friends, the state was the principal agency through which they sought to build a modern nation, a cohesive citizenry and a strong economy.<sup>219</sup> To achieve this goal, the most important tool was the Republican People's Party (RPP) which was in power without a considerable challenge to its authority until late 1940s. Because the isolation of Turkey from international politics was impossible and the gap between the Western countries was so big, Turkey did not have time to go through a slow evolution that would stretch out many centuries.<sup>220</sup> For this purpose, Atatürk formed various reforms in order to catch up with Western countries and achieve the level of the contemporary societies of the West.

Initially, he decided to overcome one of the most important problems in society: the interaction of religion and government. Ziya Öniş expresses that:

There is no way that a liberal democracy can take root in a Muslim society without a strong commitment on the part of political elites to the principle of a secular political order and firm constitutional safeguards that prevent the violation of the secular character of the state.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Richard D. Robinson, "The Lesson of Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 5, no. 4 (Autumn, 1951): 428.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 434.

<sup>219</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 272.

<sup>220</sup> Richard D. Robinson, "The Lesson of Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 5, no. 4 (Autumn, 1951): 436.

<sup>221</sup> Ziya Öniş, "The Political Economy of Islam and Democracy in Turkey: From the Welfare Party to the AKP," in *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East*, ed. Jung Dietrich (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 106.

Because of this, secularism was accepted as the main grounds of the state's legitimacy because it regulates the state's approach toward different religions and sects and prevents the exploitation of people's religious sentiments.

For this purpose, after the abolition of the Sultanate in 1922, another obstacle against the new republic, the Caliphate was also abolished in 1924. According to Mustafa Kemal the country would never be free from the old regime unless Islam was neutralized politically and the Caliphate functioned in the political arena as a symbol against his reforms.<sup>222</sup> The phrase that "Islam is the religion of the state" was removed from the constitution in 1929. Although the people's religious feelings were respected, they were not permitted to found any ethnic or religion-based political organizations. Furthermore, these restrictions were also enforced by constitutional laws. For example, Article 24 of the constitution asserted that "education and instruction in religion and ethics shall be under state supervision and control," and "no one shall be allowed to exploit or abuse religious systems."<sup>223</sup> Also, through legal and institutional changes, the secular system of law and education destroyed the influence and power of the *ulema* within the state administration, put orthodox Islam under state control, and outlawed the use of religious speech as propaganda for political purposes.<sup>224</sup> By enforcing these secular reforms, Atatürk's aim was to secure the revival of the Islamic faith in individuals' hearths whose religious sentiments had been used habitually as a political instrument by corrupt rulers for many years. He also intended to reduce the religion's effect in public life. For this purpose, he passed the "Hat Law" in 1925 and prohibited wearing the fez, which was starting to be used by the puritanical minds as a symbol against new reforms and the new republic. Furthermore, he outlawed the wearing of veils by government officials in their public service and restricted the wearing of religious clothes by religious leaders except in their offices. Islamic schools and brotherhoods were closed by the government along with the abolition of *Şeriat* courts in the country.

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<sup>222</sup> Susanna Dukupil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 69.

<sup>223</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations,"" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (2000): 52.

<sup>224</sup> Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (June, 2005): 170.

In order to achieve a complete separation of church and state, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) was founded. Although, in some circles it is argued as a contradiction to the meaning of separation of church and state, in fact during these times it was a necessity for government to take religious education under control. Hakan Yılmaz argues that in France, when Catholicism was separated from the state by the revolution, it did not fall into a vacuum because there was a well-established social institution, the Catholic Church, in existence. On the other hand, in the Islamic world, especially in the Ottoman Empire, there was no Church-like social institution.<sup>225</sup> Hence after the foundation of Turkey and the abolition of the Caliphate, it became necessary for the government to build the DRA in order not to let religion drag into vacuum and be exploited by others for wrong purposes. Hence, since 1924, the DRA has been in charge of religious affairs and the interpretation of Islam in Turkey. It accomplishes its task by controlling the content of Friday religious sermons in order to prevent the formation of anti-Republican ideas, and by formulating a “modern Islam” in accordance with the needs of the state.<sup>226</sup> Moreover, the DRA has many other functions, such as controlling and administering worship places through its own bureaucracy, controlling and administering the study of Qur’an courses, enlightening the public on religious subjects by answering their questions, organizing conferences and workshops, and publishing religious materials.<sup>227</sup> In order to fight against bigotry, the training of religious personnel was regulated and taken under the control of the government; religious schools (*Imam Hatip* high schools) were taken under the regulations of the Minister of Education, their curriculum was given a secular form, and religious officials were transformed to ordinary state employees with regular salaries.

During the one-party era, another important reform was the introduction of the alphabet, which was regulated by philologists according to the roots of the Turkish language by the order of Atatürk. By doing so, literacy rates increased very quickly in

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<sup>225</sup> Hakan Yılmaz, “Islam, Sovereignty, and Democracy: A Turkish View,” *The Middle East Journal* 61, no. 3 (Summer, 2007): 487.

<sup>226</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 23.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

society. The percentage of the literate population rose from 8 percent in 1928 to over 20 percent in 1935, and 30 percent at the end of World War II.<sup>228</sup> In addition, while the new alphabet speeded the learning of language, it also strengthened the link with Western cultures, which in return facilitated the modernization process in Turkey. An expanded program of technical and increasingly liberal education was established in order to challenge the superstition and dogmatic fatalism of village society.<sup>229</sup> Atatürk also put special emphasis on Turkish women. Even before many of the European countries, he granted the right of suffrage to Turkish women in 1930. Many special education programs were organized for them while they were encouraged to actively participate in every part of the society. Although his ambition was to strengthen the private sector, because of the devastating effect of the wars on economy and society, he pursued state-sponsored economic activities in order to build the whole country from the beginning. The way and the main ideology lying under these reforms can be summarized as the key features of the Turkish democratization process.

## **1. Key Features of the Turkish Democratization Process**

The key features of Turkish democracy are embraced in the ideology of Kemalism/Atatürkism, which finds its meaning in Atatürk's intent to create a secular country out of the heartland of the old Islamic Ottoman Empire. It emerged because the revolution had sought an ideology that would guide the people towards modernity and win their allegiance so that they would be able to substitute patriotism for religion.<sup>230</sup> Kemalism consists of six principles that were launched by Atatürk in 1931 and incorporated into the constitution as a state ideology in 1937.

### ***a. Republicanism***

Republicanism, which can roughly be perceived as the first step toward democracy, means popular sovereignty. It was embodied in the Turkish state system in 1920 when the National Assembly acquired both the legislative and executive powers in

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<sup>228</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993): 82.

<sup>229</sup> Richard D. Robinson, "The Lesson of Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 5, no. 4 (Autumn, 1951): 436.

<sup>230</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2003): 88.

its hands. After abolishing the Sultanate in 1922, a republican form of state was also incorporated into the Turkish constitution with its promulgation on 29 October 1923. The ideology of Republicanism is the most important guarantee against the sovereignty of a person or a group. It is the main ideology behind the foundation of the Turkish state system. Because Atatürk had always been an admirer of popular sovereignty in order to protect the republican form of the country, he isolated the army from political life. He prohibited officers from participating in politics unless they chose to retire. Officers who chose not to take off their uniforms were dismissed from the RPP.

***b. Nationalism***

Nationalism is the dominant ideology that generated grounds for uniting people under the same flag and led to the foundation of modern Turkey and democracy. During the First World War and especially from the onset of the Independence War, nationalism as a characteristic of Turkish identity started to become stronger than religion. During the Independence War, the nation was believed to be the cause to fight for and, if necessary, die for, just as religion had been previously.<sup>231</sup> Nationalism, by Atatürk's definition, is inclusive rather than exclusive as it is in the fascist interpretation of nationalism based on ethnicity, blood, or birth. According to Atatürk, anyone who lived within the borders of the new Turkey, who shared country's fate and who wanted his country to develop, regardless of his religion, could call himself a "Turk." In order to promote this ideology, following the foundation of the new republic, by means of the mass media, education, flag saluting, national anthem singing, state parades and non-religious holidays on national anniversaries, many attempts were made to socialize the people into becoming patriotic citizens of a secular republic.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Hakan Yılmaz, "Islam, Sovereignty, and Democracy: A Turkish View," *The Middle East Journal* 61, no. 3 (Summer, 2007): 485.

<sup>232</sup> Metin Heper, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey: Toward a Reconciliation?" *The Middle East Journal* 51, no. 1 (Winter, 1997): 34.

*c. Populism*

Populism, which means political ideas and activities that represent ordinary people's needs and wishes rather than a group or family's, is one of the attributes of Kemalism. It embodies the notion of national solidarity by putting the interests of the whole nation before the individuals' or particular groups' needs.<sup>233</sup> It denies class structures and rejects any discriminative forms of activity. In accordance with this ideology, since democratization also needs economic progress, Atatürk aimed to pull the whole nation together by gathering each individual's efforts.

*d. Etatism*

Etatism emerged as an ideology when the bourgeoisie failed to support the economic program of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk by failing to invest in the country's infrastructure.<sup>234</sup> In accordance with etatism, the state undertook to build infrastructure and industry where private entrepreneurs were too weak to invest and did not find profitable in the short term.<sup>235</sup> Etatism promoted the reorganization of economy in the hands of the state which aimed at providing stability in the economy. With the implementation of this ideology, Atatürk intended to build the whole country from its "ashes" by making the state spearhead investments such as building railroads, highways, and factories and providing certain services such as banks and so on. Moreover, while the state was administering monopolies, in order to promote private investments, money loans were given to entrepreneurs and farmers with low interest rates by the banks that had been founded with the investment of the state in accordance with etatism. Consequently, with the adoption of this ideology, in the 1930s, etatism expanded so much that the state became producer, investor, and at the same time, entrepreneur in the country.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 182.

<sup>234</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2003): 89.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 273.

*e. Secularism*

Turkish secularism must be understood as “laicism” which means state’s control of the religion rather than a precise separation of religion from the state. Hakan Yavuz claims that Turkish secularism seeks to create its own version of “modern Islam” to enhance reforms of the nation-state.<sup>237</sup> Hence, laicism can be considered a positivist state ideology in order to engineer a homogenous and stratified society.<sup>238</sup> Being one of the most significant principles in Turkey’s democratization process and its constitutional theory,<sup>239</sup> laicism provides freedom of conscience by preventing the effect of religious circles. Susanna Dokupil argues that Atatürk’s aim was to secure the revival of the Islamic faith and to disengage it from being a political instrument, and that this could be accomplished only in conjunction with secularizing reforms that should penetrate all levels of Turkish society.<sup>240</sup> Although it is generally perceived that secularism started with the foundation of modern Turkey, it actually started to emerge during the Ottoman Empire with reforms that had taken place in the 19th century. However, contrary to the Ottoman era, secularism in modern day Turkey is explicitly different in terms of the religion’s position in the public sphere, in judiciary, and education. In addition to laicism’s aim to control religion with state institutions, Atatürk also intended to reduce religion to the individual level. By doing so, he achieved the chance to promote nationalism and unite people under the same notion of being Turkish citizens instead of being pious Muslims.

*f. Reformism*

And lastly, reformism means the continued need for development in every sphere of life. It defines the whole reform and revolutionary movement that started after the Independence War and promotes a further quest of modernization. It encourages the

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<sup>237</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 27.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>239</sup> Serif Mardin, “Religion and Secularism in Turkey,” in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, eds. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993): 347.

<sup>240</sup> Susanna Dokupil, “The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey,” *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 127.

commitment of the nation to the ongoing change and support for Kemalist reforms.<sup>241</sup> It constitutes the main ideology behind Atatürk's main goal to catch up with the contemporary, most developed societies.

### C. MULTI PARTY ERA

Successive governments of Turkey wisely did not attempt to introduce full democracy all at once, but instead went through successive phases of limited democracy, laying the foundation for further development, and, at the same time, encouraging the rise of the civil society.<sup>242</sup>

Thus, democracy was gradually established as the cultural level of people became adequate to support it in 1945. However, during his life, Atatürk made two attempts to achieve a multi-party political system. In 1924, an opposition party called the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) was founded. This party was against the economic policies of RPP and sought a more decentralized minimal state interventionist economic policy. Moreover, PRP was also against the strict secular reforms that had been implemented by the authority since its foundation. Only one year after its foundation, following an assassination attempt against Atatürk in Izmir, and due to the PRP's connection with the Sheikh Sait Rebellion,<sup>243</sup> which was started by Kurdish tribes because of the abolition of the Caliphate and *Şeriat* in 1924, the party was outlawed in 1925. Another multi-party attempt took place in 1930. Due to the opposition voices rising from society against the RPP's one party regime, Atatürk himself encouraged the founding of an opposition party named the Free Republican Party (FRP). Yet, the FRP was also short lived because of exploiting its freedom in an attempt to destroy the whole philosophy of the revolution.<sup>244</sup> Eventually it was dissolved by its founder, Fethi Okyar, who was not able to control his party's activities, especially those targeting the republican order and its reforms.

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<sup>241</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 182.

<sup>242</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the Only Muslim Democracy," *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March, 1994): 45.

<sup>243</sup> D. Ali Arslan, "Türk Dünyasında Toplumsal Değişme Ve Modernleşmenin Tarihsel-Toplumsal Temelleri: Bir Örnek Model Olarak Türkiye," *Uluslararası Hakemli Sosyal Bilimler E-Dergisi*, no. 6 (May, 2005): 7.

<sup>244</sup> Richard D. Robinson, "The Lesson of Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 5, no. 4 (Autumn, 1951): 427.



It is broadly accepted that, fundamentally, democracy in Europe has emerged from the working classes' and bourgeoisies' pressures against ruling authorities. In the Middle East, post-World War II and Cold War policies defended traditional class structures, restricted the power of working classes, encouraged the rise of ultra-right wing, anti-democratic groups and thus prevented the development of the very conditions that, in Europe and elsewhere, are associated with democracy.<sup>245</sup> On the other hand, unlike the Middle Eastern countries in the 20th century, the political, educational, and economic reforms that were intensified after the foundation of modern Turkey prevented the emergence of these anti-democratic structures. From the beginning of the republic's history, Atatürk always intended to build a strong, democratic, and modern Turkey. All of his reforms were geared toward this purpose.

Michele P. Angrist explains the international influence over Turkey's transformation to pluralism as the Cold War's effect in its democratization process. Especially in the 1940s, Turkey was faced with Russia's explicit threats toward its own lands. According to Angrist, in order to counter this threat and ally with the West against Russia Turkey's RPP leaders allowed political pluralization in the belief that it would help Turkey acquire moral and material support from the Western alliance.<sup>246</sup> It is true that somewhat encouraged by the victory of liberal nations over totalitarian countries, Turkish leaders encouraged the formation of opposition parties after World War II.<sup>247</sup> Moreover, taking into consideration the declaration of the Truman Doctrine that promotes the idea of supporting the countries against Soviet expansionist policies and the Marshall Plan that includes direct American aid to these countries, Turkey made a deliberate choice in allying with Western democratic countries against Russia and this policy contributed to the foundation of democracy in Turkey, followed by its accession to NATO and the European Economic Community during this period. However, these factors fall short in explaining the other incentives that stimulate the existing RPP leaders

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<sup>245</sup> Sandra Halperin, "The Post-Cold War Political Topography of the Middle East: Prospects for Democracy," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 7 (October, 2005): 1136, 1137.

<sup>246</sup> Michele Penner Angrist, "Party Systems and Regime Formation in the Modern Middle East: Explaining Turkish Exceptionalism," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (January, 2004): 239.

<sup>247</sup> Richard D. Robinson, "The Lesson of Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 5, no. 4 (Autumn, 1951): 428.

in taking steps toward political pluralism. From the beginning of the foundation of Turkey, Atatürk made clear that Western, particularly European, civilization should be taken as a model for modernization since their relative supremacy had been proved in the last century. For this reason, transition to the multi-party electoral democracy in 1945 from a benevolent one-party regime was perceived by Atatürk's successor, İsmet İnönü, as an implementation of Atatürk's populist principles.<sup>248</sup>

On the 14 May 1950 election, which Bernard Lewis called an "epoch-making election," the RPP that had enjoyed a monopoly of political power for decades allowed itself to lose a free election and submitted itself to the will of its citizens.<sup>249</sup> The Democrat Party (DP), with the help of its diverse support base, including modern entrepreneurs, middle-class artisans, small merchants, and rural migrants to urban centers, attended the elections and eventually won overwhelmingly.<sup>250</sup> From that moment on, Turkey's political system turned to a competitive electoral democracy which is strengthening and gradually maturing each and every day.

After the DP captured the government, the Turkish economy started to deteriorate because of the DP's poor economic policies. Moreover, party leaders also opposed frequent criticism of opposition parties and civil society that they used police and military forces to suppress these opposition demonstrations. The head of the DP, Adnan Menderes's measures against the autonomy of the press, opposition, and universities proved that he was not committed to a more free and democratic Turkey.<sup>251</sup> As the economy worsened, DP increased religious activism in order to distract the attention from economic failures.<sup>252</sup> For instance, during their convention in Konya, a resolution was introduced to bring back the fez, restore the veil, return to the Arabic script, and establish

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<sup>248</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "Elections and Legitimacy in the Middle East," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 482 (November, 1985): 132.

<sup>249</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the Only Muslim Democracy," *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March, 1994): 44.

<sup>250</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 273.

<sup>251</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2003): 112.

<sup>252</sup> Susanna Dokupil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 76.

the *Şeriat*.<sup>253</sup> Encouraged by related speeches, certain Islamist groups started to destroy Atatürk statues because, according to them, making forms of human beings is forbidden by Islamic law. These activities caused widespread resentment among secular groups, which then led to violent clashes with anti-secularists. Moreover, in 1959 and 1960 Adnan Menderes himself encouraged violent confrontations between its followers and the opposition.<sup>254</sup> When police forces proved unable to maintain order, armed forces, on May 27, 1960, took control of the government in order to reinstate the stability of the country and to preserve democracy by declaring a return to control of the state to civilian hands *as soon as possible*.

Ultimately, the military adopted an attitude favorable to Islam and recognized religion as an integral part of Turkish identity.<sup>255</sup> By doing so, they intended to preserve the rights of freedom of consciousness and worship while trying to prevent the manipulation of people's religious sentiments, politically. For that purpose they introduced a new constitution in 1961 in which they also prohibited politicians and political parties from using religion, ethnicity, and sects as a tool for their political purposes. With the introduction of new electoral law, a system of proportional representation was put into effect, which aimed at preventing mainstream political parties from obtaining a decisive parliamentary majority.<sup>256</sup> The new constitution transformed the Grand National Assembly from a unicameral form to bicameral form making it almost impossible to monopolize legislative authority by any power in the government. Moreover, with the new constitution a Constitutional Court was founded in order to check whether the laws enacted by the legislature were consistent with the constitution. This court was also given the right to judge the political parties and if they were found guilty of violating the constitutional provisions, it was granted the right to outlaw them.

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<sup>253</sup> Susanna Dokuipil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 75.

<sup>254</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "Elections and Legitimacy in the Middle East," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 482 (November, 1985): 133.

<sup>255</sup> Susanna Dokuipil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 76.

<sup>256</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 274.

Also, with the establishment of the National Security Council, the military was given a constitutional role in protecting the state against its internal and external enemies, while they achieved the opportunity to voice its opinions on national security issues as well.<sup>257</sup> After these arrangements, in 1961, the military council left the government to the civilian authority as they had promised earlier.

Turkey witnessed a more democratic environment due to the introduction of a more liberal constitution in 1961 by the military council. However this liberal outlook of religion and press, in some respect, realized the worst fears of democracy supporters in the country. Being affected by the Cold War politics, Turkish society became increasingly polarized between extreme right and socialist left. The Justice Party (JP), headed by Süleyman Demirel, attacked the RPP not only for anti-religiosity but for communist sympathies as well.<sup>258</sup> Violent leftist demonstrations on the streets and in university campuses took place against capitalism, imperialism and Western influence over the country. Moreover, high inflation and, as it had been in 1960, poor economic conditions, which deteriorated due to the global recession and 1967 Arab-Israeli war caused the situation to worsen. Because of these conditions and the government's incapacity to suppress the violence, military commanders followed a tactical strategy by presenting a memorandum to the president demanding the installation of a strong and credible government that was capable of fulfilling the required reforms stipulated in the constitution. Due to the 12 March 1971 military memorandum, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel resigned<sup>259</sup> and a new government was formed, which led to the settling down of those violent activities in the country.

Less than a decade later, after this military memorandum, the ideological divide among the population brought a new deep political polarization in Turkish society.<sup>260</sup> The new economic package, the free market system, which the government tried to

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<sup>257</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 245.

<sup>258</sup> Susanna Dokupil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 78, 79.

<sup>259</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 258.

<sup>260</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 275.

introduce, was an absolute departure from the previous protectionist system and caused resentment among the left and many businessmen. The gradual deterioration of the economy, rising inflation, and political polarization led to a mini “civil war” in the country. Furthermore, the continuing political stalemate in parliament about the election of the new president was also causing tension among society and feeding the violent clashes in the country. The National Salvation Party (NSP), which entered successive coalition governments since its foundation, was proposing the solution to Turkey’s problems as a return to Islam’s teaching.<sup>261</sup> Over time, the party became so anti-secular that in a mass demonstration in Konya on 6 September 1980, they called for a return to *Şeriat* and refused to sing the Turkish national anthem.<sup>262</sup> This explicit Islamist threat also contributed to the unrest among secular intelligentsia and military. Despite constant warnings from the military, party leaders could not take the violent incidents under control, and instead worsened the existing situation by harsh politicking.<sup>263</sup> Due to the deepening political crisis, worsening economy and growing public pessimism, the Turkish military made an official declaration on 12 September 1980 and again took the control of the country less than a decade after its previous intervention.

The leaders of the 1980 intervention restructured the political and social system with the new constitution of 1982, which was a kind of reversal of the constitutional developments of 1960,<sup>264</sup> in order to prevent the reoccurrence of such incidents that had caused the chaotic situation of the 1970s. Although the tactics of the military in restructuring the order in the country was argued by many circles as being undemocratic, with the adoption of the 1982 constitution, the secular features of the country were emphasized and specified that this feature cannot be repealed. Moreover, this new constitution reiterated the importance of the rule of law and the aforementioned Atatürk’s principles. In order to ensure political stability, they introduced a 10 percent threshold for political parties to enter parliament. Many of the state officials and especially members of

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<sup>261</sup> Binnaz Toprak, “Islam and Democracy in Turkey,” *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (June, 2005): 171.

<sup>262</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 268.

<sup>263</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, “Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model,” *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 275.

<sup>264</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 281.

the armed forces, teachers, civil servants and students were barred from becoming members of political parties<sup>265</sup> in order to prevent political polarization among them. Moreover, they promoted religious education in order to teach students basic knowledge of Islam and its ethics as well as Atatürk's principles, particularly secularism. With cooperation between the Ministry of Education and the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University, compulsory religious education was introduced, which began in the fourth grade and continued until the end of high school. The main purpose of these reforms was to reduce the chances of exploitation of religion by educating citizens around the country. In addition, the government emphasized adult education and opened many adult literacy programs on all over the country, which then led to a rapid increase in literacy rates in Turkey.

After the 1980 military intervention, the ideology of NSP was continued in the Welfare Party (WP). During the 1990s, under the leadership of its founder Necmettin Erbakan, WP undertook serious efforts at grassroots in order to gather support among the society and, thus, it reached its pinnacle in the 1994 municipal elections. Afterwards, in the 1996 parliamentary elections, Erbakan became prime minister. His party took place in a coalition government and accepted the protocol of a free market economy, a tariff union with the EU, and international treaties with Israel despite its earlier rejections to them. On the other hand, during its governing period, WP chose to turn Turkey's face more towards the East and the Muslim world in order to create the Muslim union that the WP had been admiring. Because of the WP's suggestion of untested but new policies for the poor economic conditions and with the expansion of anti-Western sentiment among society due to the West's reluctance towards Muslim massacres in Bosnia, rejection of Turkey's bid to join the EU, mistreatment of Turkish immigrants in Germany,<sup>266</sup> and growing terrorist activities of the PKK, WP grew in power and in influence among society. Although it was gaining support from society, with the expansion of many private and free media organizations, the rituals of religious *tarikats* (religious

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<sup>265</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004): 281, 282.

<sup>266</sup> Susanna Dokupil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 106.

brotherhoods), the meetings of WP members calling and praying for the rise of the *Şeriat*, the calls for an Islamic state by WP's local leaders were broadcast to the country.<sup>267</sup> Eventually the military, which perceived these incidents as an explicit threat to the state, issued a declaration on 28 February 1997 demanding the government to take measures against the rising tide of Islamism. Due to the military's declaration and wide range of protests against the WP from civil society and the political arena, Erbakan was forced to resign and his coalition government dissolved. One year later, the Constitutional Court outlawed the WP because it was a center for activities incompatible with the articles of the constitution on the secular state,<sup>268</sup> and party leaders were banned from political activity for five years.

According to Toprak Binnaz, although the military played an important role in Erbakan's fall, there had been many democratic efforts by the civil society, which indeed proved the maturity of the Turkish people's democratic understandings.<sup>269</sup> With the spread of various communication devices in the country—such as television channels, internet, and radio—people easily mobilized against the government and its policies. For instance, many women in civil society organizations that felt threatened due to the WP's factious attitude towards Turkish women took an active role in monitoring the actions of the WP and organized mass demonstrations, letter writings, and open-discussions against the government. Moreover, because of the WP's policies that divided society along a secularist versus Islamist axis and the economic frustration of the citizens, many NGOs, labor unions, professional organizations, academicians, and business organizations called for Erbakan's resignation. Thousands of people's slogans that Turkey will not be "another Iran" in the stadium during soccer games, mass protests on the main squares of the cities contributed to the fall of the WP.<sup>270</sup> Because of these incidents that took place in Turkish society, Susanna Dokupil asserts that "in one sense, Erbakan's peaceful

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<sup>267</sup> Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (June, 2005): 175.

<sup>268</sup> Susanna Dokupil, "The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey," *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 118.

<sup>269</sup> Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (June, 2005): 172.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

departure suggested that the forces of democracy have strengthened in Turkey.”<sup>271</sup> Actually, this incident is also crucial for the other Middle Eastern countries that are eager to use the Turkish democratization experience as a model. Almost fifty years of democratic experience of Turkish society showed that the establishment of strong democratic institutions, freely organized civil society organizations, free media that can disseminate the contemporary news to the people, NGOs such as business organizations that are well-integrated into the free market economy and concerned with political stability due to its worsening effect on their profit margins, and a tangible protector of the state and its democratic and secular outlook are very important for the newly emerging democracies. On the other hand, this 1997 “post-modern” coup also proved that it takes time for the society and the democratic institutions to become mature and fully capable of protecting the system and its democratic outlook.

After the WP was dissolved, its ideology was pursued by the Virtue Party (VP), which was also dissolved by the Constitutional Court because of essentially continuing the WP. Thereafter, the movement split into two parties, the Felicity Party (FP) and the Justice and Development Party (JDP). The FP took a more moderate stance than its predecessors, but however, lost most of its supporters in the 2002 general elections to the JDP, which was founded by the reformist young generation within the WP after its closure and was declared a moderate, central, and secular party. Actually Mustafa Kemal and his successors’ secular ideology defined the boundaries within which all of the political parties could operate and thus made a deliberate contribution to the Turkish democracy. Moreover, in light of the past experiences of Turkish political life, Susanna Dokupil argues that Islamists who wished to create a serious opposition force in Turkish politics realized the need to operate within secular parameters, not only to avoid closure by the Constitutional Court but also to attract mainstream Turkish voters.<sup>272</sup> Furthermore the evolution of perceptions of democracy in Turkey, especially after the 1980s, changed

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<sup>271</sup> Susanna Dokupil, “The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey,” *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 117.

<sup>272</sup> Susanna Dokupil, “The Separation of Mosque and State: Islam and Democracy in Modern Turkey,” *West Virginia Law Review* (Fall, 2002): 124. Also see: Gunes Tezcur, *Muslim Reformers in Iran and Turkey: The Paradox of Moderation* (USA: University of Texas Press, 2010), 306.



in the minds of ordinary citizens as well. The adoption of liberal economic policies led to the emergence of new business circles that helped strengthen democratic principles and their perceptions in the country. Additionally, the introduction of a free market system caused the emergence of a rapidly expanding middle class of modern consumers who do not appreciate escalating ideological and political confrontations that may endanger their welfare.<sup>273</sup>

In addition to these factors, the European Union's effect over Turkey's democratization process cannot be denied. The mass popular support behind Turkey's application for EU membership left many politicians with little choice but to support further democratization and modernization in order to fulfill the requirements of accession.<sup>274</sup> Besides popular support for democratization coincides with the ideal that had been directed by Atatürk, which was to achieve the level of "contemporary civilizations." The hope of European Union membership helped provide a common project for different elements of the Turkish society, which in return softened the fundamental clash between the secular and Islamists groups in Turkey.<sup>275</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

As a good example of the compatibility of Islam and democracy, Turkey has done well in its democratization process and still continues to consolidate its democracy toward liberal concepts. Actually, it has not been easy for a predominantly Muslim country to establish democracy and consolidate it. Especially during the Tanzimat era and afterwards various new state institutions were founded on the basis of European counterparts. However, what hindered the modernization and led to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire was the coexistence of new and old institutions in the Empire. But in modern Turkey, the same mistakes were not repeated. New institutions replaced the old

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<sup>273</sup> Seymen Atasoy, "The Turkish Example: A Model for Change in the Middle East?" *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 3 (Fall, 2011): 91.

<sup>274</sup> Gamze Çavdar, "Islamist New Thinking in Turkey: A Model for Political Learning?" *Political Science Quarterly* 121, no. 3 (Fall, 2006): 496.

<sup>275</sup> Ziya Öniş, "The Political Economy of Islam and Democracy in Turkey: From the Welfare Party to the AKP," in *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East*, ed. Jung Dietrich (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 124.

ones and whole revolution logic was settled on this idea. The Independence War's effect cannot be neglected in the foundation of the Turkish Republic, which gave the country a new start to everything. For about twenty-five years, with the reforms accomplished by the one-party regime, democracy's infrastructure was settled and it facilitated understanding this new world view by the people. With the spread of education, people started to become aware of the world surrounding them and their religion, which made it hard to exploit by the politicians for their political purposes.

The vicissitudes of democracy building under the late Ottomans, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and his successors would seem to confirm the belief that democracy is a strong medicine that must be administered in small and only gradually increased doses.<sup>276</sup> In accordance with this view, from 1923 to the mid-1940s, democracy was gradually established by the RPP by implementing various reforms and also putting some restrictions over the society. From the mid-1940s to the present day, as democracy was being consolidated, many of these restrictions were lifted and a wide range of different political views became increasingly incorporated into the political system, being moderated by the state's bureaucracy and democratic institutions such as civil society, judiciary, NGOs, etc. Toprak Binnaz writes that "a democratic environment provides a platform for the organization of anti-system parties while it forces them to limit their sphere of action and to moderate their ideology."<sup>277</sup>

It is true that, as Ziya Öniş expresses, a representative democracy in Turkey caused anti-democratic powers to experience a long learning process. He further argues that the democratic order has helped to shape the demands of them in a more moderate direction, as they realized that compromise solutions were vital for their effectiveness and survival within the boundaries of a secular state.<sup>278</sup> On the other hand, the political participation of these moderate political views also contributed another dimension to

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<sup>276</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Why Turkey is the Only Muslim Democracy," *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (March, 1994): 45.

<sup>277</sup> Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (June, 2005): 184.

<sup>278</sup> Ziya Öniş, "The Political Economy of Islam and Democracy in Turkey: From the Welfare Party to the AKP," in *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East*, ed. Jung Dietrich (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 123.

Turkish democracy. By giving various political groups an organizational space and participation opportunity in the democratic process, governments started to realize the religious sensibilities of the voters more broadly.<sup>279</sup> In short, Turkey's democratization history shows a path for moderating the undemocratic groups, especially the non-violent ones, in terms of making them adopt the vital features of democracy, which in turn, lead to the moderation of the whole political sphere in the country.

It is obvious that in a democratically naive country, in order to protect the regime against its enemies, there has to be pro-democratic powerful institutions as a prerequisite for consolidation of democracy. Although the military is perceived as the defender of Turkish democracy and its secular ideology, more importantly, the democratic institutions such as the judiciary, rule of law, civil society, free media and press played a major role in drawing the "red lines" for anti-democratic players.

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<sup>279</sup> Binnaz Toprak, "Islam and Democracy in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (June, 2005): 171.

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## V. TURKEY'S DEMOCRATIZATION AS AN INSPIRATION FOR THE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES

The suggestion of Turkey as a model for democratization first emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War. Especially in the early years of the 1990s, the Turkish model became popular among Western countries, particularly the U.S., which regarded it as an ideal model for the Muslim republics that formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>280</sup> Because of Turkey's being a secular and democratic state, having experienced a successful economic transformation since the 1980s, and sharing the common culture with these Turkic states,<sup>281</sup> to many in the Western world, Turkey seemed like the natural model of state building and democratization for these newly independent Central Asian countries. Moreover, the Western countries assumed that, after its collapse in 1991, Russia would be vacating the area, thus a power vacuum would emerge in Central Asia that might be filled with an anti-Western, revolutionary kind of Iranian Islam that would endanger the Western countries' position in the region and harm their interests if nothing was done.<sup>282</sup> For this purpose, many Western countries' leaders started to present Turkey as a model that offered an alternative to a feared rise in fundamentalist, anti-Western Iranian influence in the region and counters to the residual Russian influence over Central Asian countries.<sup>283</sup>

About a decade later, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, President George W. Bush and his officials again started to promote the Turkish example in their fight against terrorism and the destruction of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and Afghanistan. This moment in the world's history led to the reemergence of such claims about Turkey as a potential model for the project of democratization in the Islamic world. The top officials and politicians of the West, particularly the American officials,

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<sup>280</sup> Idris Bal, "The Turkish Model and the Turkic Republics," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 3, no. 3 (Sep/November, 1998): 109.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>283</sup> Bill Park, *Modern Turkey: People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011): 124.

emphasized the example of Turkey in their democracy promotion program for Middle Eastern countries. They pointed out Turkey where they saw a successful coherence of Islam and democracy as a model for these countries. For example, in 2002 Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz referred to Turkey as a model for those in the Muslim world who have aspirations for democratic progress, while President George W. Bush himself suggested that Turkey provided Muslims around the world with a hopeful model of a modern and secular democracy.<sup>284</sup> With the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003, the idea of democracy formation in the Middle East was also reflected in the actions of Western countries, which then led to the adoption of the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative in the G-8 Summit of June 2004. This consensus among the world's major countries revealed that the major extra-regional actors were willing to collectively push for political and economic reform in the Middle East.<sup>285</sup> With the involvement of many countries other than the United States in a democracy promotion process in the Middle East, Turkey being an example for these Muslim countries got more attention among social scientists all around the world.

The debate over the Turkish model diminished in the second half of the 2000s. Still, beginning in 2010, the emergence of popular riots in Tunisia which triggered the other popular uprisings called the "Arab Spring" against the region's authoritarian leaders have started debates about the future direction of the political structure of these countries. The possibility of relatively strong fundamentalist Islamist parties coming to power after deposing the existing pro-Western, secular, and authoritarian leaders has led to the reassessment of diverse democratization paths among not only Middle Eastern but also Western countries. In light of these historic incidents occurring in the region, because of Turkey's place, its history, its size, its strength, and most importantly, because

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<sup>284</sup> Bill Park, *Modern Turkey: People, State and Foreign Policy in a Globalized World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011): 126.

<sup>285</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 45.

of what it is—a nation of mainly Islamic faith that is secular, democratic, and modernizing,<sup>286</sup> Turkey again became the subject of debate as a role model for Middle Eastern countries.

Before examining the Turkish model's applicability to the region, the notion of "model" has to be clarified. It would be wrong to call a model a precise blueprint that should be replicated literally. A more realistic understanding of model should consider it as a guide that offers relevant lessons from its past political, social and economic experiences and draws a practical framework for the other countries that are seeking to progress their own political, social, and economic structure by emulating this guide.<sup>287</sup> So it is more appropriate to approach the concept of model from this perspective while not ignoring that every country is a *sui generis*. For this purpose, when one calls Turkey a model, it has to be understood as a Western style inspiration based on democratization, secularization and modernization, which may lead to the institutionalization and then moderation of the political circles.

Having given the history of Turkish democratization and its key features in this process it is important to state that Turkey, where democracy has successfully emerged within the context of secularism in a predominantly Muslim country, has provided a successful example for many leaders that seek to develop a democratic system in their own countries. For instance when Pakistani leader General Pervez Musharraf broke with Islamic fundamentalists and outlined a secular feature for Pakistan, he was following an example he studied closely while he was a young officer in a Turkish military school—that of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>288</sup> In addition to Pervez Musharraf, there are also other leaders who emulated or tried to emulate Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his reforms while forming their countries. For example Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran, and King Amanullah of Afghanistan all followed Atatürk's programs of

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<sup>286</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 45.

<sup>287</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "The Turkish Model: How Applicable." TASSA Annual Conference Proceedings, March 25-26, 2006: 35. <http://www.tassausa.org/docs/TASSA2006CProceedings.pdf>

<sup>288</sup> James Kitfield, "The Turkish Model," *National Journal* 34, no. 9 (March 2, 2002): 601.

modernization<sup>289</sup> although they could not establish as successfully a modernized and democratized society as Atatürk had done in Turkey.

Henri J. Barkey emphasizes the significance of Turkey as an important link between West and East by putting forward its historical achievements in making itself as a bridge from an empire to a nation state, from theocracy to a secular state, and a system of economic backwardness to relative modernization.<sup>290</sup> Actually, Turkey, by sharing democratic systems with the West and religion with the East, truly became an example for the Muslim world by being one of the few predominantly Muslim states in which representative and democratic politics emerged.<sup>291</sup> Apart from possessing a modern democratic, secular political structure, successful economic modernization, significant improvement of relations with the EU and its parallel reforms process, the evolution of Turkey's political Islamist movement has also increased the interests in Turkey and made it relevant to the debates in the Middle East.<sup>292</sup>

In addition to Western views about Turkish democracy and its applicability to other Muslim countries, there is also an ascending sympathy towards the Turkish model and Turkey on the Middle East streets. Although it has been diminishing nowadays, until the beginning of the 21st century, most of the Middle Eastern Arab people had unpleasant views about the Turkish democracy and Turkey. Ömer Taşpınar asserts that “where Americans see Turkey as the only Muslim, democratic, secular and pro-Western country in the Middle East, Arab countries see a former colonial master that turned its back on Islam.”<sup>293</sup> In addition to seeing Turkey as an imperial master, many Arabs have considered Turkish secularism as an imposition by a small elite on a population that

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<sup>289</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “An Uneven Fit?: The “Turkish Model” and the Arab World.” *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 10. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>290</sup> Henri J. Barkey, *Reluctant Neighbor: Turkey's Role in the Middle East* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005): 11.

<sup>291</sup> Graham E. Fuller, “Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities,” *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer, 2004): 54.

<sup>292</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık, “The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East,” *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 2 (2008): 43.

<sup>293</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “The Turkish Model: How Applicable.” TASSA Annual Conference Proceedings, March 25-26, 2006: 35. <http://www.tassausa.org/docs/TASSA2006CProceedings.pdf>



continued to remain Islamic.<sup>294</sup> Moreover and most importantly, deriving from their resentments towards their corrupt, unsuccessful secular leaders and governments, many Arabs have perceived secularization as an oppressive and superficial idea that seeks to impose Western dress, lifestyle and symbols on their Muslim community.<sup>295</sup> However, nowadays this rhetoric is eroding among the Arab population in the Middle East. With the spread of mass communication devices, the Arab streets are becoming more intellectual and open to the new ideas that have been changing the outlook of many other countries on the world.

According to the TESEV's (Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation) survey that was done among seven Arab countries<sup>296</sup> and Iran in 2010, 66 percent of the respondents expressed Turkey as a model for the Middle Eastern Muslim countries. Contrary to earlier views of Turkish democracy and secularism, 66 percent of the respondents also thought that Turkey represented a successful blend of Islam and democracy. When respondents were asked the reason for seeing Turkey as a model for their countries, TESEV concluded that Turkey's Muslim background, economic power and democratic regime were the most popular answers. However, when the respondents who opposed the idea of taking the Turkish example as a model for their countries were asked the reason behind their negative thoughts, Turkey's being a secular country and not being Muslim enough were the first two most common answers.<sup>297</sup> It can be deduced from this recent survey that there is an ascendance among the positive views about democracy and following the Turkish model to achieve it. On the other hand, there are still resentments towards secularism in these Middle Eastern countries, which were most importantly deriving from their past experiences with their authoritarian leaders.

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<sup>294</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 47.

<sup>295</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 7.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>296</sup> Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Iraq

<sup>297</sup> Mensur Akgün et al., *The Perception of Turkey in the Middle East 2010* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2011): 12.

Among the political scientists, there exists a divide about the possibility of Turkish democracy being a model for Middle Eastern countries. While some of them support the uniqueness of the Turkish example, some of them assert that the Turkish steps toward democracy can be emulated by Middle Eastern Muslim countries. Aswini K. Mohapatra, who defends the uniqueness of Turkey's democratization, claims that what makes the Turkish experience unique is a combination of historical and structural factors such as the absence of landed class and formal colonialism, early consolidation of state power, establishment of popular legitimacy, close links with the West and the development of modern social groups as a result of institutional separation of state from economy.<sup>298</sup> She asserts that there was no strong landed class in Anatolia. But in the Middle East, for example in Iraq, nearly 60 percent of the land was owned by 2 percent of the total number of landholders until the mid-1950s. Similarly, in Syria 2.5 percent of the total landowners held about 45 percent of irrigated and 25 percent of rain-fed land.<sup>299</sup> It is true that after World War I and until their individual independences, the colonial countries in the Middle Eastern Arab states found it easier and more effective to govern them by only controlling the elite, which usually consisted of those landholders. Without introducing a substance of democratic rule, even after the independence of these Middle Eastern Arab countries, the colonial states left the authority to those elites who had stayed as their loyal allies for many years. These tribal chieftains, upper landed classes, and urban-based notables held control of their countries until they faced a coup from the patriotic military officers as happened in Egypt, Syria and Iraq. However, the revolutions implemented by these new leaders of the Middle East, apart from undertaking agrarian transformation and state-led industrialization, destroyed the power of the notables with land reforms, and replaced them with the state itself,<sup>300</sup> which in turn demolished the emergence of the middle-class and bourgeoisie that are typically the most important advocates for democratization.

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<sup>298</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 289.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

But, in Turkey, as the previous chapter has discussed, the implementation of etatism caused state-led economic transformations. Besides, the successful implementation of incentives for private investments in the country can be considered as a difference from the Middle Eastern countries' experiences. It is also true that the lack of colonial experience in Turkey caused easy and quick adoption of Western values. Because of this lack of colonial culture in Turkish history, Turkey inherited a strong state structure from its predecessor, namely the Ottoman Empire. But on the other hand it cannot be denied that after two devastating wars, World War I and the War of Independence, the educated population of Turkey was so diminished that it was impossible to find enough teachers around the country. For this reason, Turkey's inheritance of a state tradition could have been considered a unique condition. But when one takes into account the more than a half-century long independent governance period of the Middle Eastern countries, it may be wrong to defend Turkey's unique inheritance of state tradition as an obstacle to its being a model for the Middle Eastern Arab countries instead of examining the tangible factors that have hindered the formation of powerful state tradition in those countries.

In addition to the inheritance of imperial state tradition, Ömer Taşpınar brings up the unique role of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his gradual approach to democratization as distinctive characteristics of Turkey's democratization process. He claims the lack of these factors in Middle Eastern countries as a big gap of applicability of Turkish model to them.<sup>301</sup> It is true that there was only one Atatürk but there were also Habib Bourguiba, Gamal Abdel Nasser and many other prominent leaders in Middle Eastern countries who had the chance to change the fate of their countries in the past. Because these leaders proved their incapacity to transform their countries into prosperous democratic ones, now, in 2011, the Arab people are in the streets protesting their incumbent leaders and calling for democracy. For this reason, although it is impossible to find an Atatürk in

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<sup>301</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "The Turkish Model: How Applicable." TASSA Annual Conference Proceedings, March 25-26, 2006: 36. <http://www.tassausa.org/docs/TASSA2006CProceedings.pdf>

each Middle Eastern country, it is possible to find determined, charismatic, influential leaders in those countries who are capable of pursuing the democratization process in the foreseeable future.

Meliha Altunışık states that the argument for the lack of a secular and liberal experience in the Middle East is historically wrong. According to her, most of the Middle Eastern Arab countries were part of the Ottoman Empire while it was implementing reforms in order to modernize the empire. Therefore, they were also influenced by this modernization and secularization process with Turkish society in Anatolia. Moreover, she points out that, during the colonial era and post-independence period, secularism was the foremost characteristic of most of the Middle Eastern Arab countries' state formations like Iraq, Syria, Iran and Egypt.<sup>302</sup> So, it is not right to associate secularism and modernization reforms only with Turkish history and to consider it a unique condition peculiar to Turkey. Although Middle Eastern countries also experienced these features, because of the incapacity of authoritarian secular regimes to transform themselves through political and economic reforms, and suppression of the emerging Islamist opposition groups, secularism is generally associated with dictatorship, the violation of human rights, and the abrogation of civil liberties.<sup>303</sup>

Another factor that is debated among scholars as a unique factor in Turkey's democratization is the Western countries' and organizations' influence over this process. One cannot deny the Cold War politics' effect over the course of the Turkish political system. Moreover, as was examined in the previous chapter, Turkey's international position as a bulwark against Soviet influence also facilitated the consolidation of its economic and political development.<sup>304</sup> Turkey's institutional relations with the West through NATO, the Council of Europe, OECD, and the EU, and its bilateral relations with Washington and European capitals also have contributed to its democratic

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<sup>302</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 51.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Aswini K. Mohapatra, "Democratization in the Arab World: Relevance of the Turkish Model," *International Studies* 45, no. 4 (2008): 284.

outcome.<sup>305</sup> On the other hand, especially after the Iraq War, a direct involvement of Western countries in the Middle East is likely to bring resentment and radicalism, rather than democratic change and moderation to the region.<sup>306</sup> However, in Turkey, foreign involvement also caused resentment among the Turkish population, which contributed to the occurrence of chaotic situations that ended with military interventions. Besides, it is not a prerequisite to have direct foreign involvement in a democratization process. It is more important to provide incentives and compelling factors for Middle Eastern countries by the Western world as occurred in the Turkey's democratization process. For these reasons, it is not an exclusive factor that Turkey was stimulated by foreign countries and this notion cannot be replicated by Western countries in the Middle East. Actually the United States' and European Union's aid programs in democracy promotion in the Middle East and its recent consequences prove the applicability of this foreign involvement that causes gradual enlightenment of the society by strengthening the civil society and social media.

Scholars approach the Turkish democratization example with its applicability to the Middle Eastern Arab countries from two perspectives. The scholars who focus on the evolution of political Islam in Turkey assert that this experiment proves the compatibility of Islam and democracy with the attainability of moderate Islamism.<sup>307</sup> Actually, this evolution of Islamism is one of the most important theses of the Western countries who fight against Islamic fundamentalism all over the world. Other scholars who approach from a more general perspective emphasize the whole democratization process without limiting it to only the moderation of political Islam. They see Turkey as a democratic and secular country that is not only economically coherent with globalization, but also a member of various Western international organizations as a predominantly Muslim country.<sup>308</sup> By doing so, when it is approached from a broader perspective, the attraction

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<sup>305</sup> Steven Everts, "An Asset but not a Model: Turkey, the EU and the Wider Middle East," *Center for European Reform*, October 1, 2004: 7. (accessed October 30, 2011)  
<http://www.cer.org.uk/publications/archive/essay/2004/asset-not-model-turkey-eu-and-wider-middle-east>

<sup>306</sup> Gamze Çavdar, "Islamist New Thinking in Turkey: A Model for Political Learning?" *Political Science Quarterly* 121, no. 3 (Fall, 2006): 496.

<sup>307</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, *Arap Dünyasında Türkiye Algısı* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2010): 22.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

of the Turkish model is not limited to the moderation of political Islam rather it is widened to the foundation of democratic institutions and modernization projects in Turkey.

It is true that today, as Graham Fuller states, grievances, anger, and opposition are reflected in the rhetoric and expressions of Islamism in the Middle East. This notion is not because the people are certain that Islamism would provide the absolute solutions to the problems of their societies. Other than Islamism, the frustration of the Middle Eastern societies also found its rhetoric in other ideologies such as Arab nationalism, and Marxist-Leninism in the past.<sup>309</sup> Because of the Islamic fundamentalists' violent revolutionary actions and their terrorist campaigns, many of the Islamist organizations, whether moderate or not, were suppressed in the Middle East, which in turn caused them to go underground, not participate in political life, and resort to radicalism and terrorism against the rulers and their own populations. However, in Turkey since the beginning of the multi-party regime, various opposition groups were allowed to participate in politics. Since its foundation, Turkey has made significant progress in reconciling Islam with modernity and democracy, which made Turkey, in the eyes of not only the Western countries, but also in the Muslim world, a model for moderating political Islam through democracy.<sup>310</sup> By accommodating rather than suppressing political Islam in Turkey, Islamists naturally evolved in a moderate direction. This made Turkey an important precedent for the Middle Eastern Arab countries.<sup>311</sup> Actually, the moderation of Christian Democracy in Europe also occurred in a similar way. The imperative form of competition in democracies transformed the Christian Democrats into a more moderate character.<sup>312</sup> Similar to Christian Democracy and the Turkish example, Muslim democracy is also going to be moderated in this competition environment because the people in the Middle

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<sup>309</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer, 2004): 55.

<sup>310</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 56.

<sup>311</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer, 2004): 55.

<sup>312</sup> Vali Nasr, "The Rise of "Muslim Democracy," in *Democracy: A Reader*, eds. Larry Jay Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009): 379.

East will realize that the ideology of Islamism per se is incapable of providing tangible solutions to social grievances and so, as happened with Marxist-Leninism or Arab nationalism in the past, their influence in society would end like its predecessors'. Therefore, they will be forced to moderate their views and rhetoric in order to be accepted as a legitimate representative of the voters in a democratic environment.

Similar to those views, as a key step toward the moderation of political Islam, Amr Hamzawy asserts that, as happened in Turkey's democratization history, the Islamists' inclusion in the political arena would lead them to face the real challenges of managing contemporary societies and would give them the space to experiment in public with a range of moderate views on socio-cultural issues.<sup>313</sup> Actually, it is true that the suppression of Islamist organizations makes them more popular among society in the Middle East during the electoral campaigns. For instance, Kurzman and Naqvil assert that according to the World Values Survey, support for the implementation of *Sharia* is highest in the countries with the lowest levels of political freedom, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Whereas by contrast, when Muslims are given the opportunity to vote freely for Islamic parties, they have tended not to do so.<sup>314</sup> In addition, the evolution of Turkey's political life is becoming more attractive in the Arab streets and among the Middle Eastern Islamists. For example, in Tunisia, where a strong and educated middle class exists, the Islamist leader Rachid Ghannouchi compares his Islamist movement to moderate Turkish examples while rejecting Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution.<sup>315</sup> Furthermore, in Egypt, especially the young members of the Islamist party, the Muslim Brotherhood, are much more open to the world and anxious about bringing internal reform while being fascinated with the Turkish example.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Amr Hamzawy, "The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief*, no.40 (July 2005): 3.

<sup>314</sup> Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvil, "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?" *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 2 (2010): 61.

<sup>315</sup> Scott Peterson, "Can Tunisia Or Egypt Find Role Model in Turkey?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 3, 2011. (accessed October 30, 2011) <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0203/Can-Tunisia-or-Egypt-find-role-model-in-Turkey>

<sup>316</sup> Tariq Ramadan, "Democratic Turkey is the Template for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (2011): 42.

The Turkish example demonstrates that it is crucial to introduce democracy gradually rather than as shock therapy. Because the majority of moderate Islamists in the Middle East still continue to hold discriminatory illiberal views about such topics as gender equality, the civil and political rights of non-Muslim population groups, religious freedom, and the modernization of education systems.<sup>317</sup> For this reason, a fast introduction of democracy in those countries would cause the elections turn into “one man, one vote, one time” scenario elections, which would bring the illiberal Islamists, who would most probably use their status and power to destroy democracy itself, to power. Algeria’s experience with democratic elections that brought to power Islamic fundamentalists and continued with the degeneration of the process into a bloody civil war, is the clearest and most tragic example of fundamentalist theocracy coming to power through elections based on a “one man, one vote, one time” scenario.<sup>318</sup>

After the participation of Islamist parties in the Middle Eastern countries’ politics is achieved with the gradual introduction of liberal and democratic practices, the challenge will then be to constrain a democratically elected, Islamist-led government with effective constitutional checks and balances<sup>319</sup> in order to preclude the Islamists changing the whole form of the political system and destroying the secular and republican form of democracy. In the Turkish example of the democratization process, democracy was gradually introduced with many checks and balances. This notion can be considered the most important feature of the Turkish model in its democratization process and its emulation by the other Middle Eastern Arab countries. It is obvious that in Turkey, without the government’s limits on accepted religious teachings and on the participation of religious parties in the political process, powerful Islamic fundamentalist forces would seek to divert the country from its secular path.<sup>320</sup> Similar to this feature, in

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<sup>317</sup> Amr Hamzawy, “The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Policy Brief*, no.40 (July 2005): 3.

<sup>318</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “An Uneven Fit?: The “Turkish Model” and the Arab World.” *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 5.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>319</sup> Larry Jay Diamond, “Can the Middle East Democratize?” in *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2008): 287.

<sup>320</sup> James Kitfield, “The Turkish Model,” *National Journal* 34, no. 9 (March 2, 2002): 603.



the Middle Eastern Arab world, given the risk posed by the strong Islamist parties and their influences on society, governmental supervision of the religious establishment would be more prudent than a total separation of religion and state along the Western, particularly American, lines of secularism.<sup>321</sup> Similar to the Turkish example, the Middle Eastern states can fulfill this supervision by establishing an institution according to Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs (see Chapter IV, page 59).

The Turkish example shows that, in addition to the democratic and secular structure of the state, it is important to establish the institutional structure that is capable of overseeing political parties and furthering their moderation during the democratization process of predominantly Muslim countries. As happened in Turkey, as long as the Islamic movements and parties do not aim to change the regime to an Islamic one and accept playing by the rules, they should be allowed to operate and participate in politics.<sup>322</sup> On the other hand, if they threaten the state structure, it is very important to make the institutions evaluate these parties' and individuals' actions under democratic principles. As the previous chapter noted, the Turkish Constitutional Court has played this role many times in Turkey as a safeguard of the Turkish democracy. Apart from the Turkish experience, European countries have also barred movements such as the Nazi Party in Germany after they were deemed a threat to their democracies.<sup>323</sup> Hence, inspired by the Turkish model, in the Middle Eastern Arab countries, as Larry Diamond states, the capacity and independence of the judiciary, the parliament, the electoral commission, the audit agencies, the central banks, and other institutions of horizontal accountability has to be firmly established and constitutionally embedded well before the gates of electoral competition are thrown wide open so the risks of democratization can be considerably reduced.<sup>324</sup> Moreover, independent and free formation of civil society

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<sup>321</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 25.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>322</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 49.

<sup>323</sup> James Kitfield, "The Turkish Model," *National Journal* 34, no. 9 (March 2, 2002): 603.

<sup>324</sup> Larry Jay Diamond, "Can the Middle East Democratize?" in *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2008): 287.

organizations capable of questioning the vertical accountability of governments has to flourish as well during the democratic transition of the Middle Eastern countries in order to push for a more liberal and democratic environment.

When the Turkish experience is examined in a larger context, other than limiting this experience to the moderation of political Islam, it demonstrates a modern, democratic, and economically strong state, which is on the brink of EU accession and already a member of various international organizations such as NATO, OECD, the Council of Europe and others.<sup>325</sup> Possessing these characteristics as a predominantly Muslim state makes Turkey's profile more sympathetic to the Middle Eastern Arab states that cause Turkey's domestic and international achievements to be viewed with greater respect.<sup>326</sup> This in turn, facilitates the acceptance of Turkey as a model for the Middle Eastern countries. After the Helsinki Agreement in 1999, which granted Turkey the status of a candidate country for the accession to the EU, the political and economic strength of Turkey became more attractive among Arab countries in the Middle East. They started to follow the developments between the EU and Turkey more closely since they consider the accession of Turkey to the EU would prove that not only is the EU not an exclusively Christian organization, but also that the Turkish model is worth emulating since it may become a member of one of the world's most developed organizations. Moreover, in 2001, when the Turkish parliament refused the demands of the United States to use the Turkish soil in their war against the Iraqi regime, Arabs noticed that a democratic Turkey said no to the world's strongest country while their despotic rulers dared not to.<sup>327</sup> In addition to these factors, the Turkish experiment in transforming a centrally controlled economy into a market economy was regarded as a good example and, therefore, it became another factor for Arab intellectuals who have become more enthusiastic in their perception of Turkey as an inspiration for their countries.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Meliha Benli Altunışık, "The Possibilities and Limits of Turkey's Soft Power in the Middle East," *Insight Turkey* 10, no. 2 (2008): 45.

<sup>326</sup> Graham E. Fuller, "Turkey's Strategic Model: Myths and Realities," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Summer, 2004): 61.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> İdris Bal, "The Turkish Model and the Turkic Republics," *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 3, no. 3 (Sep/November, 1998): 118.

It is clear that Turkey provides an illustrative case of ongoing democratization from which other Muslim-majority nations can draw various lessons.<sup>329</sup> However, as it had been difficult for Turkey to establish and consolidate its democratic understanding, it would also be hard for the Middle Eastern countries to achieve the level of democracy that Turkey has achieved after decades. Instead of emphasizing what Turkey is, it is more vital to focus on how the Turkish history of democratization and modernization started and evolved over time. As the previous chapters discussed, Turkish democratization history and its features possess useful advisory steps for Middle Eastern countries. Because the Kemalist era constituted the backbone of Turkish modernization and formed the grounds for democratization, it is important to draw well-thought lessons for the Middle Eastern Arab countries. Especially the attributes that belong to Turkish democratization—specifically the Six Arrows of Kemalism—should be used as the guiding steps toward democracy. First of all, nationalism—not meaning of Pan-Arabism or racism—should be strengthened in these countries in order to gather all of their citizens under a common flag and common goal. Promoting state nationalism will strengthen the consciousness of all people, irrespective of their religion, sects or tribes. This notion has to be strengthened with the introduction of secularism—as a necessary condition for democratization—which, will eradicate the differences between citizens who have different religions or sects, and will make the government treat its citizens equally. For this purpose, other than considering secularism as unbelief, it is crucial to focus on its deeper meaning of equal approach to all religions and sects in order to escape from the secularism-Islamism polarization that locks the political actors in perpetual conflict.<sup>330</sup> Thereafter, with reformism, most importantly, modern education should be promoted in the Middle East. For instance, in Turkey the Kemalist ruling elite prioritized education and modernization in order to replace the traditionally religious social life of

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<sup>329</sup> Seymen Atasoy, “The Turkish Example: A Model for Change in the Middle East?” *Middle East Policy* 18, no. 3 (Fall, 2011): 86.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

Anatolia with an enlightened public mind.<sup>331</sup> By following the steps of Turkish etatism with an up-to-date perception, industrialization has to be promoted where the private investments fall short. While doing so, private sector and entrepreneurs should be encouraged by the state because the Turkish example shows that the emergence of a strong middle class is a crucial precondition for democracy and its consolidation.<sup>332</sup> With populism, socioeconomic and political resources have to be distributed justly. This notion is one of the most important factors that the Middle Eastern leaders should pay attention to. The third chapter examined the rent income's effect over a society that hinders the people's will and capacity in seeking democracy. In light of this effect, the rent income has to be directed toward various other areas of development without using them as subsidies for the population. However, these attributes of the Turkish experience should not to be perceived as a general recipe in the way of democratization. Successful governments in Turkey have implemented these features back and forth for many years and introduced them gradually, until the minds and perceptions of the people became adequate for democracy.

Having historical and emotional roots in the Middle East that originated from the Ottoman's centuries-long rule of these lands makes Turkey more acceptable as a model in the region. It is broadly accepted that Turkey's Muslim, secular and democratic identity provides the intellectual grounds for the feasibility of democracy in the Middle East.<sup>333</sup> After showing that secularism is a necessary but not a sufficient condition in the Turkish democratization process,<sup>334</sup> taking into account the characteristics of the Middle Eastern Arab state's perception of Islam and its place in society, it will be more feasible

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<sup>331</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 22.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>332</sup> Ziya Öniş, "The Political Economy of Islam and Democracy in Turkey: From the Welfare Party to the AKP," in *Democratization and Development: New Political Strategies for the Middle East*, ed. Jung Dietrich (Gordonsville, VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 124.

<sup>333</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 4.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>334</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, "The Turkish Model and Democratization in the Middle East," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1/2 (2005): 55.

to introduce a softer implementation of secularism in order to win the hearts and minds of millions of Muslims in the Arab world.<sup>335</sup> However this does not mean to carve out a secular state system that is more tolerant and close to the Muslims. Instead, to reiterate, the state has to take control of religious teachings into its hands and every ideology's inclusion into the political arena has to be guaranteed constitutionally without letting them exploit this right by using every effort in trying to destroy the democratic system itself. For this purpose, as Ömer Taşpınar asserts, the Kemalist transformation between 1923 and 1950 serves major relevance for transition to democracy in the Arab world. He claims that the introduction of free elections should be seen as the culmination of the democratization process while establishing a positivist education system should be the top priority.<sup>336</sup> Moreover, the foundation of strong state institutions is also vital for the protection of democratization in the Middle East. The Turkish example demonstrates that a devoted judiciary, military, intelligentsia, in short, state bureaucracy with the undisputed power of the civil society, make it difficult to destroy the secular and democratic stance of the country.

As happened in the Turkish case, in the Middle East a better balance between democracy, secularism, and Islam can be found if political liberalization is adopted gradually while the state is pursuing its economic development programs successfully.<sup>337</sup> Because, as Amr Hamzawy expresses, the gradual integration of Islamist movements in politics with constitutional and legal restrictions will compel them to stay between the red lines of the secular and democratic state. Afterwards, those restrictions will stimulate them to improve their flexibility in accepting the existing state structure and this will be reflected in both their rhetoric and practices, thus transforming them from powers rejecting the political system to ones accepting it and active within it, either as legitimate opposition or as ruling powers.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 24.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>338</sup> Amr Hamzawy, "Islamist Lessons in Turkey," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, August 16-22, 2007.  
<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/858/op23.htm>

It is certain that the Turkish democratization history has very useful experiences for the Middle Eastern countries. From moderating extremist parties to the institution building process; from state-led economic development to the implementation of a free-market economy the whole system of Turkish modernization and democratization process can inspire many Middle Eastern countries in the Arab world. The crucial thing in this inspiration is to not forget that every country is *sui generis*. Because of this, it is more important to choose and adopt what is appropriate for each country instead of taking the whole Turkish democratization process as a blueprint for the emergence of democracy.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Having the roots of democracy in the Western World or having the most liberal democracies in the Western countries does not mean that democracy pertains to the Western World. Whether the word “democracy” is used or not, almost all Muslims today react to it as one of the universal conditions of the modern world<sup>339</sup> and evaluate the concept of democracy at least as favorably as Christians.<sup>340</sup> As the second chapter discusses, democracy is not about religion, ethnicity, or culture. Islam itself does not possess an inherent contradiction to the core values and principles of democracy. Indeed Islam possesses three important factors that can provide the grounds for democratization in the Muslim world: consensus, consultation, and independent reasoning. The assertion that Islam and democracy are incompatible by some scholars and theologians does not derive from Islam per se, but derives from their different interpretation of Islam and the implementation of its teachings. Moreover, many of these intellectuals’ oppositions against the compatibility of Islam and democracy actually reflect their resentments and anger towards the Western world, which emanates from their unpleasant experiences with Western countries, particularly during the colonial era. By refusing to acknowledge the coherence of Islam and the idea of democracy, they also express their grievances that derive from suppression in the hands of pro-Western, secular, and authoritarian leaders during the post-independence period of their countries. Actually democracy depends on the development levels of societies. Once the society becomes mature economically, politically, and socially, regardless of the country’s place in the world, democracy may start to emerge gradually.

The Turkish experience proves that democratization is a long and painful process and its consolidation and successful internalization may take generations.<sup>341</sup> Even in

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<sup>339</sup> John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, “Democratization and Islam,” *The Middle East Journal* 45, no. 3 (1991): 440.

<sup>340</sup> Steven R. Hofmann, “Islam and Democracy: Micro-Level Indications of Compatibility,” *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 6 (2004): 658.

<sup>341</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “An Uneven Fit?: The “Turkish Model” and the Arab World.” *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 3.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

Europe, the emergence and further consolidation of democracy lasted several decades. Moreover, the emergence of a truly secular Europe became possible only after substantial progress had been made in mass education, living standards, and representative democracy.<sup>342</sup> For this reason, it would be naïve to expect democracy to emerge in the Middle Eastern Arab countries in a very short time. In order to achieve democracy in the region, the main hindrances have to be closely analyzed. As the second chapter stated, the difficulty of achieving democracy in the Middle Eastern semi-authoritarian countries stems not from Islam itself but from the dominating rulers and their well-planned decades-long tactics: Manipulation of elections with which they have masked their authoritarianism; coercion and suppression of different parts of the society; concessions given to the major political and institutional actors as bribery; and controlling the media and civil society with a vast array of legal and extra-legal tools. And these are only some of the tactics that the Middle Eastern leaders have been using for many years to keep their offices intact. Furthermore, despite many domestic and international pressures, these rulers have managed to sustain their power through the rents coming from their countries' natural resources, transit ways, foreign aid or sometimes from the money sent by their guest workers. In light of these factors, one can conclude that the most important obstacle standing against democratization in the Middle East has been the rulers themselves.

However, recent incidents in the Middle Eastern Arab countries showed that mass communication and technology are progressing very rapidly within the societies that make the Arab people more conscious about the world surrounding them and encourage them to demand a more open society that can prosper and ascend to the level of modern democratic countries as well. With the spread of social media, it became very difficult for governments to hide information from their own people and to prevent mobilization against them. Furthermore, with the impact of globalization in the Middle Eastern countries, even the authoritarian governments are compelled to make radical economic decisions, which therefore lead to radical political changes towards capitalism in order to compete with other globalizing countries, or at least not to be dominated by them.

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<sup>342</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 18.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)



Knowing that the democratization process in Europe generally started with capitalism, it is a good sign for the anticipated emergence of democratization in the Middle East. Besides the recent uprisings, namely the Arab Spring, proved that whether the authoritarian Middle Eastern incumbents volunteer to reform their country or not, the society has become exhausted with their rules and has now started to demand justice, equality, democracy, and prosperity.

Having shared a centuries-long common history with Turkey under the Ottoman rule as well as the same religion, there cannot be a better opportunity for the Middle Eastern Arab countries to consider Turkey's democratization history as an inspiration for democratizing their own countries. Although the eventual outcome of achieving genuine democracy by following the Turkish example is alluring in the minds and hearts of many Arab intellectuals, it is more crucial to focus on the democratization process of this example. What made Turkey a democratic country has not occurred in last decade; instead it began during the late Ottoman period and has continued to the present day. In order to understand the way Turkey achieved its democracy first, the key feature of its modernization project, namely the principles of Kemalism has to be observed. While doing so, the most crucial principle, secularism, or laicism, has to be understood. It emerged as the only alternative for implementing a progressive program<sup>343</sup> in an Islamic society of Ottoman heritage. Moreover, it guaranteed the government's approach to all its citizens equally, regardless of their ethnicities, religions or sects. While doing so, Atatürk took religious teaching under control of the state by founding the Directorate of Religious Affairs. As we can see today, sometimes when religious education is conducted in private institutions completely outside the oversight of the government, the result can be what we see in the Taliban example.<sup>344</sup> Instead of a religiously oriented education, Atatürk introduced the modern western style education with the implementation of many other reforms. Furthermore, since economic development is one of the key elements in the democratization process, the Turkish government first implemented state-based

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<sup>343</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 21.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

<sup>344</sup> James Kitfield, "The Turkish Model," *National Journal* 34, no. 9 (March 2, 2002): 603.

investments while encouraging private entrepreneurs, and then in the 1980s, introduced the free-market economy to keep up with the globalization of the world. Since the whole system of democracy would be demolished without strong and stable democratic institutions to operate as a moderating force<sup>345</sup> in the political system of the country, successive governments of Turkey introduced democracy gradually, while establishing the vital institutions capable of defending the democratic outlook of the country. As Ömer Taşpınar states, “Atatürk realized that holding free elections would derail the whole modernization process, so a very cautious approach to the adoption of democracy emerged as an important dimension of the Turkish model.”<sup>346</sup> As Turkish democracy faced threats posed by different spheres of the political arena, it evolved and moderated these anti-democratic powers with its democratic institutions, such as the judiciary, civil society, military, NGOs, free media and press, and so on. Moreover, the ideal goal for achieving the level of contemporary societies that was set by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk motivated the whole country in its efforts to modernize and democratize. This understanding has been reflected by Turkey’s various applications to become a member of many different international organizations, which in turn further motivated and compelled the whole society to become more liberal and democratic.

In light of this short summary of Turkey’s democratization history, it is obvious that it provides a useful template for the democratization of the Middle Eastern countries. However, it is important not to forget that every country is *sui generis* so the parts that will fit this template have to be related to the uniqueness of each country. Richard Robinson summarizes the general path of Turkish democratization in six steps. Actually, these steps taken by Turkey after its foundation are likely to be adopted by the Middle Eastern countries as well. First of all, he asserts that, there has to be a well-intentioned, progressively-minded and broadly trusted government that will institute the rule of law. Second, a liberal and secular education has to be formed in order to challenge the

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<sup>345</sup> Sheri Berman, “Taming Extremist Parties: Lessons from Europe,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 1 (January, 2008): 17.

<sup>346</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, “An Uneven Fit?: The “Turkish Model” and the Arab World.” *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 21.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

superstition and dogmatic fatalism of the under-educated society. Third, the state has to encourage private entrepreneurship while performing state-led investments where these private entrepreneurs fall short. Fourth, gradual introduction of democracy is crucial until basic social, educational, and economic reforms could be securely launched. Fifth, dragging the society to modern machines and industry will minimize the unrest and spread its benefits over the entire population. And last, substantial foreign aid—from the U.S. or EU—in support of the reform process in these countries will minimize the risks of collapsing the democratization efforts.<sup>347</sup>

Encouraging democratic elections in Muslim countries, without addressing the problems of uneven distribution of socioeconomic and political resources,<sup>348</sup> low literacy rates, non-industrialized economy, and the habitual exploitation of Islam by the politicians for their own interests will not succeed. It is true that the spread of modern secular education would erode intellectual and physical boundaries<sup>349</sup> between different classes, ethnicities, sects, and religious groups by enabling tangible and constructive connections among them. Besides, knowing that out of 280 million Arabs, 65 million adults are illiterate, it is likely that holding elections without the introduction of widespread modern education, anti-democratic radical Islamic rule would emerge<sup>350</sup> because people perceive it as the only viable political power after being frustrated with their pro-Western, authoritarian rulers for decades. Introducing various economic reforms and approaches to capitalism, without sacrificing the state's own economic dynamics, as was done in Turkey's development, will create the rule of law and an accountable state by developing new business classes and a middle-class that would question governments and their policies as well. Moreover, genuine constitutionalism, which is a complicated system of checks and balances designed to prevent the accumulation of power and abuse

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<sup>347</sup> Richard D. Robinson, "The Lesson of Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 5, no. 4 (Autumn, 1951): 436.

<sup>348</sup> Ali R. Abootalebi, "Islam, Islamists, and Democracy," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 3, no. 1 (March, 1999): 21.

<sup>349</sup> Dale F. Eickelman, "Islam and the Languages of Modernity," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1, Multiple Modernities (Winter, 2000): 125.

<sup>350</sup> Ömer Taşpınar, "An Uneven Fit?: The "Turkish Model" and the Arab World." *Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World*, The Brookings Institution (August 2003): 25.  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld\\_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2003/08islamicworld_Taşpınar/Taşpınar20030801.pdf)

of office,<sup>351</sup> has to be settled on strong roots by creating an independent judiciary to oversee it as in Turkey, where this process has been accomplished by its Constitutional Court for many years.

Democratization in the Middle Eastern Arab states should be dealt with in the context of institutionalism because effective and impartial institutions would bring the genuine rule of law, which would guarantee constitutional liberties that would then lead to the emergence of democracy and its consolidation. In this regard, in addition to foreign involvement that may monitor the democratization process, Turkey should be included in this process by the Middle Eastern Arab countries in order to utilize its past experience for these newly emerging democracies.

Democratization is not only a political but also a social, economic and cultural evolution. This process has to be monitored closely and introduction of reforms has to be handled gradually. Particularly in the Muslim Middle East secularism, in better terms laicism, should be the cornerstone in the democratization process since it encompasses all of the people and regulates their equality. Consolidation of the institutions such as civil society, an independent judiciary and military, legislation of secular laws that will prevent the exploitation of people's religious values by political actors, and promoting positivist education with economic improvements are the least necessary conditions of successful democratization in the Middle East.

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<sup>351</sup> Fareed Zakaria, "Islam, Democracy, and Constitutional Liberalism," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (Spring, 2004): 19.

## APPENDIX

Table 1. Democracy and World Regions, 2002<sup>352</sup>

Region	Number of countries	Number of liberal democracies (% of all countries)*	Number (%) of liberal democracies, with FH-value <2.5	Average FH-value for respective region	
				1974	2002
Western Europe and anglophone countries	28	28 (100)	28 (100)	1.58	1.04
Latin America and Caribbean	33	30 (91)	17 (52)	3.81	2.49
Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union	27	19 (70)	4 (15)	6.50	3.39
Asia (East, South-East, South)	25	12 (48)	4 (16)	4.84	4.38
Pacific Islands	12	11 (91)	8 (67)	2.75	2.00
Africa (sub-Saharan)	48	19 (40)	5 (10)	5.51	4.33
Middle East and Northern Africa	19	2 (11)	1 (5)	5.15	5.53
Total	192	121 (63)	73 (38)	4.39	3.38
Arab countries	16	0	0	5.59	5.81
Predominantly Muslim countries	43	7**	0	5.29	5.33

*Notes:* \* = current number of democracies according to Freedom House (FH) classification; \*\* = This group includes Albania, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Turkey.  
*Source:* Brumberg and Diamond (2003: x).

Alfred Stepan comes to the conclusion of half of the world's Muslim population is living under democracies, near-democracies, or intermittent democracies by counting the approximate number of Muslim population in all countries. He not only included the 110 Muslims in Bangladesh, but also Pakistan's 120 million Muslims and Turkey's 65 million Muslims. He also included the India's 120 million Muslims with the other approximate 20 million Muslims living under democratic regimes in areas such as

<sup>352</sup> Michael Minkenberg, "Democracy and Religion: Theoretical and Empirical Observations on the Relationship between Christianity, Islam and Liberal Democracy," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 6 (2007): 894.

Western Europe, North America, and Australia. Finally, by adding them to each other, he comes to the number of 435 million Muslims. He even asserts that, if one counts Indonesia's 190 million Muslim population, the number of the people living under some form of democratic regime would be over 600 million.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Alfred C. Stepan, "Religion, Democracy, and the "Twin Tolerations,"" *Journal of Democracy* 11, no. 4 (October, 2000): 49.

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